



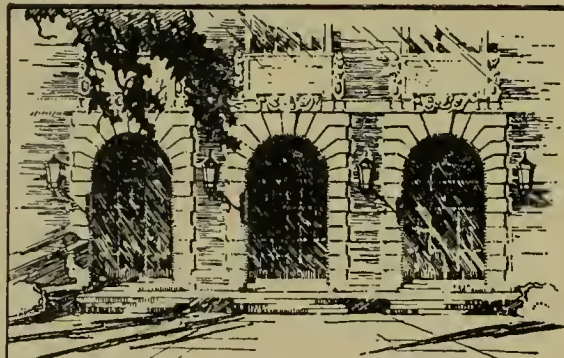
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THE
HEIRESS OF BRUGES;

A TALE

OF THE YEAR SIXTEEN HUNDRED.

BY

THOMAS COLLEY GRATTAN,

AUTHOR OF "HIGHWAYS AND BYWAYS,"
"TRAITS OF TRAVEL," &c.

Alasse, alasse! what a thing Love is; why it is like to an ostry faggot, that once set on fire, is as hardly to be quenched, as the bird crocodill driven out of her nest.

LODGE AND GREEN.

IN FOUR VOLUMES.

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TO

THE HON. LADY BAGOT,

THIS ATTEMPT TO DEPICT REMOTE EVENTS

AND MANNERS OF A COUNTRY

IN WHICH SHE FILLS SO ELEVATED A STATION,

IS RESPECTFULLY INSCRIBED,

BY

HER LADYSHIP'S

MUCH OBLIGED SERVANT,

THE AUTHOR.

Brussels, May, 1830.

THE
HEIRESS OF BRUGES.

CHAPTER I.

THERE is scarcely any where a town that presents so many points of quiet beauty as Bruges. Its aspect is soothing rather than striking. The memory of old times seems to rest upon the place, undisturbed by innovation or caprice. Recollections of splendour and refinement are unmixed with associations of feudal harshness; while fancy conjures up and embodies the spirit of chivalry in the garb of pure romance.

The town may be broken, as it were, into innumerable fragments. Each street, canal, and square offers several distinct pictures ; but the most pleasing is undoubtedly that from Rozenhoed Quay. It is somewhat strange that even the inhabitants of the quay in question can give no satisfactory derivation for its name. The most common notion is, that the place was so called from having been, for days beyond counting, a chosen spot for the sale of little religious images worn by the lower orders, and specially of the rude rosaries called *Roosenhoedje*. The French, during their possession of the country, scorning this etymology, christened it the “*Rue des Roses*,” a sentimental approach to the pronunciation of the unexplained word, and somewhat warranted from the close neighbourhood of the flower-market. But under the present government it has recovered its ancient name, and is at present thus alone distinguished.

It is well, however, for those who value such obscure concerns, that records exist to prove

the real origin of this title. The quay was, in fact, built by, and called after, a citizen of some celebrity, between two and three centuries back, Siger Van Rozenhoed; whose best chance with posterity (like the father of Charlemagne) would have been to have had his tombstone engraven with the name of his child—after this fashion :

“ Here lies the Father of Theresa Van Rozenhoed.”

We may not now trace the citizen's real epitaph; for the cemetery in which he was buried was totally defaced, by unsympathizing improvers, many a year ago; when mausoleums and tombstones were alike demolished, and with them all the fame conferred by the stone-cutter's chisel. But Van Rozenhoed derived his from a better source—his own talents; and he did, in truth, and for his own sake alone, merit a monument more lasting than either stone or brass.

Siger Roozen was by trade a gold-beater;

and, in the year 1580, inhabited that quarter of the town which stretches northward, from the great square to the Asses' Gate,* at that time a straggling extent, containing several close and ill-built streets, with gardens and orchards intermixed, the houses being either of wood, or preposterous specimens of the worst style of architecture, and then almost all tumbling into decay. The one occupied by Siger Roozen was one of the oldest and most dilapidated. It threatened death and burial at the same time to any one venturous enough to become its tenant; but the hardihood of Siger Roozen braved the danger, for the advantage of possessing in imagination a mansion of a hundred chambers. Such had once been the one in question, as was evidenced by some rotten beams and rafters, with sundry marks against the walls, roofs, and ceilings, of what

* So called, it is believed by the native antiquarians, from the number of these animals used by the country people coming to market.

was, a century before, the still inhabited remains of a splendid palace. It had been constructed by the last representative of the noble family of Savenslacht, who was massacred, with many other men of rank, by the rebellious citizens, under the very eyes of their captive sovereign, Count Louis de Creci, in the year 1325. The family became extinct in the person of this unfortunate victim ; and his large possessions and new built palace being confiscated, descended through several generations of strangers to his race. These possessors had none of the sympathy of family pride to preserve in tact the integrity of the estate, or keep up the unwieldy splendour of the mansion. The first was accordingly sold, resold, and subdivided ; the latter crumbled away, moulding by moulding, cornice by cornice, wing by wing, galleries, corridors, and parlours ; till at length, in less than three hundred years from its erection, it became a desert shell of bare and wea-

ther-beaten walls, enclosing a mass of ruin and rubbish, and affording but a little corner nook, supported over one of the vast cellars, in which the poor and houseless gold-beater secured a shelter from the storms of the sky and the world.

Life had been up to this period a hard trial for Siger. He had held a long tussle with poverty and ill luck ; and he never dreamt of being able one day to put his foot on their low-bent necks. But he indulged in, without knowing from whence they arose, long reveries of wealth and grandeur. He used often to look up at the ruin which sheltered him, or gaze from some jutting stone into the void of its wide area, and pace, in fancy, saloons and halls of renovated splendour. He sometimes rubbed his eyes, in hopes of their opening again on realities ; and always turned away with a sigh for these illusive minutes, which were worth an age of his every day life. Even in his sober

hours, when the ding of his hammer told him where and what he was, he used to start at the notion that he had freed the prisoned spirit of the metal by his strokes, and that it hovered round him in grateful guardianship. Marvel-ling at these strange vagaries of imagination, he would ask himself what could have put them into his brain? But he never could solve this oft-repeated question; and never understood that his visions arose from the fumes of a dormant ambition, thus constantly giving notice of an existence which only waited for an excitement to be fully developed.

Siger Roozen was in fact a man of circumstances—not a man to make them. His impulses, feelings, and passions, though all integral parts of an energetic combination, required events to draw them out. Had he been a man of *genius*, these elements would have created events, instead of following them. But as it was, he was only a strong-minded, clever fellow, prompt to seize on and turn to

the best account whatever might offer itself to his purpose.

He was about thirty years of age when he secured the refuge just described, and he continued in its unrestricted occupation for several months. Siger, whose mind was at once active and speculative, amused himself in his leisure hours, when his hammer was laid at rest, in clearing away a little plot of garden ground, close to the remains of an octagonal pavilion which had tumbled, like the mansion, into premature decay. He worked for several days, with pickaxe and shovel, clearing away the rubbish. One or two stragglers, who saw his work, and did not comprehend the possibility of redeeming sufficient of the soil to form a turnip bed, soon set the report afloat that poor Siger Roozen, sick of life, was about to put an end to it, and was digging his own grave. But his intentions were still more profound ; and he soon satisfied his inquisitive neighbours that his object was to make life itself more palatable,

by being enabled to add, at small expense, a few pot-herbs to his soup, or a relish of parsnips to his Friday's dinner of salt stock-fish. This candid explanation of his motives relieved him from all the troublesome effects of curiosity. He was allowed to delve at his daily task without further observation; and well it was for him that he was not observed.

It was about the sixth or seventh evening of his labour, that, having returned from his master's workshop, and taken the shovel once more in hand, to clear away the last of the fragments of stone and brick which had impeded his progress, he was surprised to find that the instrument, at the very first stroke, penetrated through every obstruction, and sunk, half handle up, into a cavity, the bottom of which it did not touch. Siger started back, as if an earthquake had gaped before him. But he recovered himself in a moment or two; looked round wistfully, to be sure that he was unnoticed; and

returned to his work, with a quicker throbbing of the heart than seemed justified by the occasion ; but it was caused by a vague sensation of hope, the extent of which was not known even to himself. Custom had by no means extinguished the dreamy thoughts which had taken possession of Siger's mind, from the very first day he had fixed himself in the skeleton remains of Savenslacht House. He made it his abode, with a vapoury notion of he knew not what, but something like that which makes the holder of a lottery ticket calculate (or at least speculate) in his own despite, on all possibilities, probabilities, and chances.

Judicial astrology, alchemy, and their concomitant absurdities, still lingered at this period in the belief of many people ; and the Low Countries were, in particular, the strong-hold to which they retired, as they were driven out from the popular credulity of other nations. The discovery of the new world, and the suc-

cesses of the first adventurers, had turned the hopes of gain into channels of greater certainty ; and the vulgar abandoned by degrees the stargazing philosophers, and listened with all their ears for the chink of transatlantic gold. Had Siger Roozen been an educated man, he, no doubt, like many others, would have prostituted his knowledge in the pursuits of alchymy, for he loved the precious metal in his heart. But being unlearned, he could only hammer it in the practice of his trade, and long for it in his leisure hours. He had lately entertained some serious thoughts of going to the Indies, or to the new found world, without any settled purport beyond that of finding an El Dorado, if he could, or stretching out his arms, like the maiden of the mythology, for any shower of gold which might fall. Something, however, kept Siger steady to his native town ; and that something was merely a want of enterprize ; though the result of his present adventure convinced *him* it was little less than an inspiration.

We left him a few minutes ago, returned to his labours of excavation, and we may now imagine him embowelled in the earth, nearly shoulder deep, groping curiously with the extended shovel ; his footing steady at bottom of the cavity, but his head swimming, with mixed sensations of hope and apprehension. He at every moment expected to feel his instrument strike against an iron chest, or some hoard of secret treasure, as certainly as though it had been directed by a divining rod. At length, and after near an hour's continued delving in the extensive cavity, the shovel did come in contact with some object that felt different from any thing it had before struck against, and unlike those of our labourer's anticipations. It was a hard body in a soft covering. Siger threw down the shovel, and stooping low, he felt the material with trembling hand, and ascertained that it was neither more nor less than an old sack, of a texture originally coarse as well as strong. His fingers instinctively dabbled in every fold

and crevice of the canvass ; but he could not by this means discover the nature of its contents. Once more throwing a cautious glance above him, and being again assured that the twilight shades concealed no witness to his discovery, he resolved to lift the sack in his arms, heavy as it was, and drag it, for secret inspection, into the furthest corner of the vault, where the faint light from above could barely serve, without betraying his purpose. He accordingly raised it up bodily, and with considerable effort ; but the pressure of its weighty contents against the opening burst the rotten ligaments which bound it, as well as the worn out stuff of which it was made ; and from its many apertures an actual flood of treasure poured out, at the feet of the amazed and bewildered man. Siger, slipping his hold of the sack, let the torn fragments fall with their discharged contents ; and he stood for some seconds, with straining eyes and reeling brain, gazing on the floor of the

vault, which gave a literal representation of the strand in the Faery Queen,

“ Bestrewed all with rich array,
Of pearls and precious stones of great assay ;
And all the gravel mix'd with golden ore.”

Siger could never recollect how long he stood thus fixed ; for when he came to his recollection, he found himself stretched upon the heap of wealth, cold and benumbed, the moon shining down into the vault. He knew not whether (as is most probable) he had lain in waking reverie, or swooned from excess of wonderment and happiness.

The first instinct of recovered sense made him nervously grasp whole handfuls of the coin and jewels. His next feeling was anxiety to be assured that he was still alone ; and he started on his feet, and looked up into the garden. Although again satisfied on this point, he still dreaded interruption ; and, urged by impulse more than reason, he began to scrape

over a quantity of sand and rubbish, until he had completely reburied the whole mass of treasure. He then cautiously emerged from the place; and creeping along by the walls and through the tangled shrubs, he gained his hovel. There, however, he could not rest. The hum of street noises filled him with uneasiness; and the lights in the neighbouring houses made him fancy every inhabitant on the watch to seize upon his treasure. He grasped the first, indeed the only, weapon he had at hand—the hammer of his trade; and with his nerves rigidly wound up for a desperate defence against all assailants, he again repaired to the pavilion, and there kept constant watch during the whole night; nor left his post till the broad daylight convinced him that his remaining on the spot was in itself as suspicious as it was unnecessary.

For two days more did Siger suffer tortures of the most various kinds. He feared to return to his secret hoard—he dreaded to quit the place

for a moment ; slunk in and out, when he sought each poor repast, with the air of a thief, instead of the swagger of a rich man—sat watching by day from his nook, and prowled at night in the garden, close to the spot which contained the hoard, which he panted once more to gloat over, yet dared not. His thirty years of poverty had been bliss, in comparison with his three days of wealth. He had all the suffering of a miser, without any of his enjoyment ; and he feared, at times, with the superstition of his character and that of the age, that some fiend had played him a trick of mere delusion ; or, supposing the whole affair to be real, that some other might spirit away the treasure into the gaping depths of the earth.

Siger, however, did not long bend under these apprehensions, so degrading to a man of his natural strength of mind. The first shock of this sudden change gone by, he recovered himself sooner, perhaps, than most other men would have done, after such a metamorphosis ; for, in

fact, one accustomed all his life to crawl close to the earth might well require some preparation, before he could stand erect, and go on two legs. Frequent visits to the vault were now boldly undertaken by day, as well as at night, and Siger divided his treasures into various parcels, which he carefully buried in several parts of the premises that held no attraction to intruders. He began to walk more boldly in the streets, as he passed to and fro ; and ventured to offer a couple of the larger coins for exchange, merely averring that he had found them. He had a tolerable notion of their value, and was not cheated, but made a dexterous shew of anxiety about the merest trifle, to remove any chance of suspicion, which an air of indifference might have excited. But he was all the while convinced that he was the actual possessor of almost boundless wealth. The very gold in coins, ornaments, and articles of plate, he saw to be of great value. He was afraid to calculate the worth of the jewels ; arithmetic seemed to want numbers to complete

the reckoning, and his head turned whenever he made the attempt.

His first purchase was a new suit of clothes. His fustian jerkin was flung aside for a doublet of green plush, with a pair of breeches of the same stuff. A short cloak of grey cloth was thrown across his shoulders; a beaver hat, with its broad leaf turned up at one side, graced his head. He wore a somewhat coarse, but well stiffened ruff, after the fashion which the Spaniards had introduced into the Low Countries. He drew on a pair of dark blue hose, with red worked clocks, fastened his broad-toed shoes with rosettes to match the hose; and stepped forth, the Sunday next but one after his discovery, a specimen of a good-looking and well-dressed tradesman of the still wealthy town he inhabited.

As he sallied out of the ruined porch of his retreat, the neighbours stood forth from their dwellings to stare at him; uncoiffed heads were thrust from the windows—the children left off

play—the very curs seemed to look involuntary respect—caps were doffed, and salutations proffered—and every one seemed to acknowledge the influence of externals, on the principle of a quaint English writer of about that very time : “ The body being the shell of the soul, apparel the huske of that shell ; the huske often telling you what the kernel is.”

Carelessly returning the civilities of his neighbours, Siger passed on, with a buoyant heart and light step, across the open garden ground that sloped down to the Canal of the Lion. He there crossed the two old planks which did loose service to the passers, the only remnant of a wooden bridge built in the thirteenth century, and which had taken its own name, and given that of the canal, from two clumsy lions, that grinned in old oak from its battlements. As Siger placed his foremost foot on these planks, it slipped through the interstice into the water ; upon which, he piously knelt down, unmindful of his new breeches, and made a vow to build a bridge

on the spot, and to dedicate it to St. James, the patron saint of the parish. Rising again, and turning to the left, he entered a shop of small dimensions, by the door of which hung the brazen dish with indented edge, the universal sign of a barber in all civilized countries. There did Siger undergo the pleasant operation of having his beard trimmed and pointed; and having his toilette thus complete, he entered, with an air of decorous humility, into the Church of St. James. just opposite.

As soon as mass was ended, Siger left the church, with the soothing reflection of having gone through his morning duty, at least in form. He now moved quickly onwards, without further hindrance, across the great square; turned to the left again, unmindful of the *carillon* which was loudly pealing above him, and soon traversing the smaller square called the Bourg, looking with a mixture of deference and self-confidence at the palace of the Counts of Flanders and other aristocratical mansions around, he suddenly

stopped at the low portal of the Dominican convent, which opened into the narrow street close behind the palace walls.

Siger never held his head so high—he never rang the convent bell so boldly ; but he felt, notwithstanding, the reverential sinking of heart which invariably accompanied his visits to the holy place. With a timid step, he followed along the vaulted corridors the menial brother who had answered his call, until at length the latter left him at the door of the cell of Father Wolfert, Siger Roozen's confessor.

“ Wait here, Mynheer,” said the monk, who did not recognize, in the well-dressed citizen, the poor artizan whom he had often before admitted : “ wait here, till our reverend brother is disengaged ; there is a lady with him just now, and the sacred duties of the confessional must not be disturbed. Stand back when the lady retires from the cell ; then knock, and you will be admitted in your turn.”

Siger bowed assent, and took his station at

the door, sitting down close by, on one of the stone-benches which were placed in the corridor, for the accommodation of attendant penitents, or of the brethren as they needed rest during their hours of in-door exercise. And thus did the richest man in Bruges humbly await the leisure of one of the poorest monks in Flanders.

CHAPTER II.

FATHER WOLFERT, the Dominican, had been at this period about three years an admitted brother of the cloister of White Friars at Bruges. He was then verging towards middle age; of a proud demeanour, and bold yet sinister expression of countenance; his complexion was dark, his eyes large and black, and his whole aspect significant of a haughty churchman, galled by the fetters of a subordinate station, and having in view the mitre, the red hat or the tiara, each or all. A newly closed

scar across the forehead, and his left hand shrivelled and contracted by a wound which had pierced it through, proved clearly enough that rapier or halberd had been busy with the novice; but in those troublesome times such marks were too common to excite any particular attention.

In a little while the new brother took a high station among his fellows. He gained this ascendancy by superior talent. He was eloquent in the pulpit, indulgent in the confessional; and he soon acquired among the citizens a reputation and an influence, equal at least to that of any individual of the numerous orders which were established in Bruges, and he was deep in the secrets of many noble families. Siger Roozen had been the very first man who had knelt to him, and whispered his little transgressions in his ear; but as the father grew into fashion with the higher classes, he gradually declined the confessions of the poor; and he had resolved to discard even the

original sinner, who formed his earliest stepping-stone to celebrity. He had shaken off many pretended penitents, by progressively increasing the severity of his penances. Fanatics were driven away by too much indulgence; but as Siger Roozen did not decidedly belong to either of these classes, Father Wolfert had not quite determined on the means for relieving himself from his importunities.

Siger had waited for a long time, more impatiently than he was wont to do, and he wondered at this change of feeling, not being quite aware of how sensible he had become to his own importance. At length he heard the inner door of the cell creak on its hinges, and in a moment more, Father Wolfert appeared leading out a lady. Siger caught a full view of her, and saw that she was very lovely, and in tears. She no sooner saw that she was observed by a stranger, than she blushed deeply, held a Venetian mask close to her face with one hand, and with the other she gathered her

cloak around her ; and hurried away, leaving the reverend friar in an attitude of surprise at her sudden escape. He looked round, and observed Siger Roozen, hat in hand, standing close by.

“ How now ! ” said Father Wolfert, haughtily, “ who is this that prowls at my threshold ? your business, friend ? ”

While he asked these questions he stood out into the corridor ; but as he uttered what followed, he gradually stepped back into the cell with Roozen, closed the door, and sat down on an oaken chair.

“ Why, what’s this ? Siger Roozen, in such brave apparel ! This change betokens either good or ill fortune, Siger ; some one has stretched to thee a helping hand, or thou hast put thine own where it should not be. Come in, good fellow, if I may still call thee so ; but if thou hast aught on thy conscience, unburthen it freely, and quickly, friend ; for prouder, it may be greater, sinners await me. Well, Siger Roozen, of what crime wouldst thou be absolved ? ”

“ No *crime*, holy Father ! ’Tis a matter that weighs not on my soul, although it agitates my mind, on which I would crave your reverence’s counsel.”

“ Aye, aye, ’tis ever thus—no crime, no crime—some trifling peccadillo that a short prayer or two may absolve. Thus sinners judge themselves too leniently, friend Siger. But hold—let’s see—thy offences, great or little, spring apace. ’Twas but on the St. Bavon, I last shrove thee, worthy friend, not ten days gone—truly thou then hadst nothing to confess, save some wild and misplaced reveries of grandeur. Please Heaven and all the saints thou hast not been tempted, Siger !—haste, haste, man, the bell tolls—what is thy secret sin ?”

“ No *sin*, holy Father, though I have been tempted indeed.”

“ Come, come to the point—be brief. Whence comes this finery ? Who hast thou robbed ? Where is thy buff jerkin, and the fox skin cap that covered so fitly thy frowzed locks, which

now curl down so trimly on a kersey cloak ? Tell me all—there's mercy in our holy mother church—speak out, friend ?”

“ This touches me to the quick, reverend father—you wrong me. I am no thief ; had I been so, perhaps my guise had been more cautiously chosen. Men dress to please their fancy, Father Wolfert, and the wisest suits his habits to his means—yet I have not done that quite.”

“ Why no ; methinks, good Siger, thy outfit is somewhat unsuited to the fair earnings of a poor mechanic.”

“ A poor mechanic ! yes, reverend Father, but *I* am no longer such. No longer poor, no more a mere mechanic. You marvel that I wear a cut plush doublet and a beaver—know, my good Father, that did I choose it, my body might be covered with velvet and embroidery, and this plain hat encircled by a carcanet of diamonds.”

The consequential tone of voice, and swag-

gering air, which accompanied it, gave Father Wolfert some surprise, but he did not betray any. He smiled incredulously. Siger, perceiving this, threw his hat on the ground, with apparent indifference, although he could not resist a pang at treating so roughly a new article of dress, the best of its kind he had ever worn. His hands being free, he thrust one into each of the side pockets of his loose breeches, and immediately pulled forth, and placed on the little stone table, two fistsfull of old coins of various kinds. Florins of Italy and Spanish moidores were mixed with golden deniers of Brabant, oboles of Luxembourg and Bar; whihottes and patars of Namur, stamped with a ship; vishes of the same country, with a fish for the device; héaumes of Hainault, bearing crosses and roses; but all were of the smooth-worn coinage of the olden time, the most modern being full three centuries old. Father Wolfert, on seeing these specimens, at once divined the truth of

Siger's good luck, and starting from his seat he exclaimed,

“ Why, Siger Roozen, you have discovered a treasure—you have found gold !”

“ I have, may it please your reverence, with the blessing of Heaven! not only gold but jewels. Here, holy Father, accept this poor gift for charity sake, for the funds of your blessed order ;” and with the words he emptied his pockets completely of their contents, and heaped them on the table. “ This is the first offering of my gratitude to Heaven. And this for *you*, holy Father, my spiritual guide, and the counsellor on whose advice I rely to steer me safely through the perils with which the possession of wealth abounds.”

Siger, suiting the action to the word, drew from an inner pocket of his doublet a large gold ring, in which was set a brilliant of dazzling lustre and considerable value, which he held forth to the astonished monk.

“ Why, Siger, my good master, you know

not what you offer," exclaimed Father Wolfert. "There is here wherewithal to make the fortune of a dozen artizans like yourself. The proudest Burgher of Bruges might not for very shame's sake wear this ring on his forefinger!"

"Most reverend Father," rejoined Siger, with an air of much humility, "I have an hundred such."

"Indeed!" exclaimed the monk. "Sit down, my worthy friend, sit down. A trifling matter this! Is it so it must be called? No, no, good Master Roozen, this is verily a matter of moment. Be seated, and let us talk this over."

"But your reverence is in haste—we may defer the conference—some sinners wait your holy aid—your reverence told me so just now."

"Tut, tut, my valued friend, let them still wait. Are paltry sinners to be tended, and worthy men laid by? your gold here shall be the price of their indulgence. We'll pray

off their penance, for this once, with all those others whom your charity absolves. A *hundred* such, good Siger ! sit closer, man—speak low ; into my very ear ; these walls may listen if they will ; hark, Siger !”

To prove the mystery of the place, and of his craft, he struck his knuckles against the wall, which sounded thin and hollow, as if it had been framed for purposes of concealment and listening.

“ It is not every one should know this, Master Roozen ; but your bountiful gift entitles you to the freedom of the cloister ; and this generous pledge of kindness towards myself, tells me I ought to have no guile with you. So gently whisper to me ; and softer still, in aught that may commit yourself, good Siger. How came you by this treasure ?”

“ *Honestly*, Father Wolfert ; as any man, with a strong arm, and directed by Heaven, might do. I dug it out of the earth,” ex-

claimed Siger aloud, and standing upright before his confessor.

“ So much the better, so much the better, good Master Roozen. As Providence has guided you to this wealth, prudence must watch over its application. We must pray for support ; and to propitiate the holy St. Andrew, the patron of our cloister, you must give freely to the church. A good beginning insures a happy term. Piety brings profit, and is the foundation stone of fortune !”

“ I know it all, good Father, and I shall not be forgetful of my duty. I am indeed filled with gratitude for my good luck. My heart overflows with thanksgiving ; and I only wait for a fitting time to perform a pilgrimage.”

“ Talk not of pilgrimages, Master Roozen ; honest men need not such trials.”

“ I’ve made a vow, good Father.”

“ I’ll free thee from it, Siger. Bear up, man ; there’s nothing on thy conscience.

Pray, my good Burgher—Burgomaster that will be ! Prostrate your spirit before heaven and your saint ; but hold your body straight, and your head high. If you do not over-rate your wealth —if indeed you possess an hundred gems, each as much worth as this one—aye or fifty, half as valuable—I promise you a place with the best in the city. None shall o’ertop you, Master Roozen. Away then with penance and pilgrimage ; he who gives freely to the church needs no such means to make his peace with Heaven.”

Siger liked this doctrine, although it was new to him ; and the unction which the monk had laid to his ambition produced its full effect. He suddenly and silently resolved to abandon the pilgrimage ; but finding his thoughts becoming confused on the subject of his growing greatness, he proposed to his reverend companion to adjourn till the evening all further discussion on his plans and prospects. Father Wolfert having more than one engagement of

some import on his hands, consented to this postponement, and fixed the hour of evening between twilight and moonrise to meet Siger on the western rampart, not far from St. James's Gate, and close to Savenlacht House; there to hear the details of his wealth, and consider the proper steps for its security and application.

Siger took his leave, and for the first time received a firm pressure from the hand of his holy friend, a proof of his own importance that thrilled through him. He had quitted the cell and was fairly in the corridor, before he recollected the lady with whose appearance he had been so much struck a little while past. Emboldened by the cordial familiarity of the monk, he stepped back, and putting his hand against the half closed door he said,

“Please your reverence to excuse my presumption—”

“Presumption, my dear friend, don't men-

tion such a word—it has no meaning from you to me—speak freely !”

“ May I then ask, without too far intruding, who was the lady whose beauty so much struck me as she quitted this place just now ?”

Had F'ather Wolfert not been standing with his back to the dull light admitted through his little casement, Siger might have discerned a slight frown and slighter blush passing together across his brow. He paused for a moment, and then answered,

“ Oh ! she is one of my peculiar flock, Master Roozen, of a noble family, a penitent, in short, why do you ask about her ?”

“ Is she married ?” demanded Siger.

“ Married ! no, no,” said the monk.

“ So much the greater pity,” exclaimed Siger Roozen ; and repeating his farewell, he quitted the cloister ; loitered about the town in a restless state of mind ; walked into the church of Notre Dame, where he stayed for the celebration of the mid-day mass ; dined at a

tavern; and by various other means contrived to occupy his time, till the hour of meeting with the priest.

We must not encumber these introductory passages to our story, with details of all that took place between Roozen and Father Wolfert. It is enough to state the results of their conferences. The intriguing caution of the one was proportioned to the ambitious enterprize of the other. Wolfert took care to make the ground firm under his friend's foot; and *that* once planted, Siger felt himself bold enough for undertakings, which, even in his days of most shadowy hope, seemed far beyond possibility. The monk acquired over him a still greater ascendancy than ever; for without his cunning management, Siger clearly saw that he had no security for the possession of his wealth, and for those advantages which he determined that it should obtain.

The state of Belgium at that period was one of doubt, danger, and confusion. The contest

against Spanish tyranny had loosened all the ties which bound society together. In the fierce struggle for liberty every minor consideration was forgotten; and property of all kinds was left insecure, between despotism and anarchy. The city of Bruges, though still a place of great wealth, inhabited by many noble families, and in many ways distinguished, was rapidly declining. The turbulent spirit of its inhabitants in its proud and palmy days, when it was the emporium of Europe, had by degrees deprived it of that high distinction. The richest and most enterprising of the foreign merchants had one by one abandoned it. The establishments of the various European powers, those of the Hanseatic Towns, its best privileges and its most lucrative manufactures, were transferred to Antwerp. Emigration and war decreased its population, improvement became stagnant, property fell in value, speculation died away; but when an individual shewed more energy than his fellows, and ventured a

large purchase or extensive risk, his gains were, if successful, consequently enormous. However, as before mentioned, the insecurity of property at this crisis left little relish for enterprise; and most men were contented to repose on the wealth they had inherited, or enjoy a competence, rather than hazard ruin in straining for increase.

Still enough of its former greatness remained to make Bruges in many ways delightful. It was at the period in question free from the actual presence of war. The riotous character of the people had subsided into one less agitating, though full as exciting. Men's minds became, by degrees, enlightened, instead of being inflamed; general interests gained a gradual, but by no means a complete ascendancy over local objects. The weavers, a body of men so desperately notorious in the history of the town, had in the opening of the revolution abandoned their looms, and taken up arms; not as of old, to sustain some sordid monopoly for

private gain, but to fight against an odious enemy for the public good. With purity of motives came refinement of manners; and the great mart of commerce was changed into the chosen seat of elegance. The arts began to burst vividly through the fumes of intestine war. Painting, sculpture, and music, were protected and encouraged; luxurious living and splendid apparel had been for ages characteristic of this celebrated place; and even at the period we treat of, the style of the female inhabitants, noble and plebeian, might have excited a remark from any queen who visited it, similar to that of the royal consort of Philip le Bel, in the fourteenth century, that "she found there six hundred ladies as well dressed as herself." Such were the striking features of the city, when Siger Roozen began to raise his head above the ignoble crowd, and looked even higher than that, for the indulgence of his aspiring views.

The motives of Father Wolfert, in giving

his aid to the fortunate gold-beater, were manifest. He hoped, by the influence of Siger Roozen's wealth, partly expended in large gifts to the church, to gain such credit with its dignitaries as would ensure the first objects of his ambition; and these, once acquired, he had but little doubt that the rest would follow. He therefore set to work to clear away all impediments to Siger's uncontrouled and positive possession of his treasure. By his influence with the grandees of the city and the official guardians of its rights, he obtained permission for Siger's becoming the purchaser of the ruined walls and deserted premises of Savenslacht House; representing him as one who had obtained a small inheritance by the death of a relative, but who, wishing to establish himself entirely in his native city, had converted his distant property into cash. This point arranged, Siger repaired to Antwerp, where lapidists, merchants, and money-changers abounded; and he found no difficulty in dis-

posing of a portion of his ancient coins, and a few jewels, for the sum required for his purchase. This once completed with the authorities of the city, into whose hands the dilapidated premises had fallen, the deeds duly registered, and possession formally given, the new proprietor had no obstacle to the avowal of his discovery, and to as much of his wealth as he chose to acknowledge.

Siger's first step (to propitiate the church) was to commence the foundation of a convent on the site of the old mansion. He thus compromised with his conscience, by Father Wolfert's suggestion, for his intended pilgrimage. His next measure (to conciliate the town) was an offer to purchase the whole of the waste ground, stretching from the ramparts, west, to Asses' Street, east, and bounded on the south by the little canal before mentioned, over which he had crossed, by the aid of a couple of rotten planks, on the Sunday of his confession, to Father Wolfert. The

town dignitaries were rejoiced to get a supply to their coffers by the purchase money; and every one thought that Siger was flinging away foolishly the wealth he had so fortunately acquired, in a purchase which, although made for a sum far below its intrinsic worth, was pronounced dear at any price in the doubtful circumstances of the country. But Siger did not stop here. He immediately commenced the building of a long and handsome range of houses, extending at each side of the convent, in front of which gardens were laid out and planted down to the edge of the canal. This range of buildings he named *Ouden Zac*,* in honour of the rotten recipient which had enclosed his treasures; and though an opposite row of houses has since his time converted this place into a regular street, it still bears its primitive appellation, which was respected even by the French, during whose authority it was called *Rue du*

* Old Sack.

Vieux Sac ; and, running in right angles with the convent, a street leading from *Ouden Zac* to the canal, was soon constructed, and called then, as at present, the *Rozendael*.

Another of Siger's improvements was the erection of a bridge across the canal, in pursuance of his vow, at the place where the old planks were used to lie. This bridge was dedicated to St. James, after whom it was officially christened ; but, even to this day, it is known by the more common name of *Zheger's Brugge*,* which was given to it by the popular voice, and which superseded for a time that of "The Lion," its ancient title. The planning of this bridge created a question of some importance to the rapidly increasing consequence of its founder. Nicholas Van Block, the stone-mason, who, under the patronage of his old friend and companion, Siger Roczen, was now become Mynheer Van Block, the sculptor and architect, protested that such a thing

* Siger's bridge.

was never heard of as a bridge being erected without the arms of the founder being placed in bas relief on the battlements. Siger was sadly puzzled how to reply to this hint. Arms he had none but the stout pair that nature had furnished him; nor could he guess at any pretension which he could raise to heraldic distinctions of any kind. In this dilemma, as in all others, he had recourse to the ready aid and as ready wit of Father Wolfert; and neither of them failed him now, any more than on former occasions. A proper application was made, with a proper way of backing it, to old Wootershoft, the celebrated herald of those times, whose office at Ghent contained the records, titles, and genealogies of all Flanders. He soon found out that Siger Roozen was the direct descendant of a younger branch of the noble house of Van Rozenhoed, which, on the emigration of its representative to Germany, above two centuries before, had fallen into

decay and distress ; and, after the lapse of several generations, had finally dropped the nominal distinction of nobility, and corrupted the orthography of the family name, in the person of Siger's grandfather. This discovery was officially confused and authenticated by so many intricate technicalities, that opposition would have been vain, had there been any one inclined to oppose. But that not being the case, Siger became, in due form, and by all the privileges of the law, installed in his new name of Van Rozenhoed ; and his pedigree was attested and engrossed on vellum, with the arms richly emblazoned at the head of the scroll. These were argent, a scymitar gules, a scutcheon of Flanders dexter, and one of the empire sinister ; so far being those of the old and now resuscitated house ; quartered with which, at the special and positive desire of the new member, were three hammers, en-pal ; and, for crest, a sack *gueule* (open-mouthed) discharging a shower of money.

Siger was determined to specify, by this means, for his own gratification and the information of the descendants he hoped for, the leading features of his history and their ancestry.

This point being arranged, the bridge was finally built, and the battlements duly surmounted by the Lion of Flanders, bearing a shield on which was sculptured the arms, as above minutely detailed; and the curious may, even yet, be gratified by tracing these remains of Nicholas Van Block's chiselling, and the record of Siger Van Rozenhoed's munificence.

But while these various erections of convent, bridge, and mansion took effect, Siger was thinking of matrimony. Strange as it may seem, he had never lost sight of the lady whose beauty and whose tears had so much interested him at the door of Father Wolfert's cell; and the result of his inquiries from the monk satisfied him that she was vir-

tuous and amiable, though poor and persecuted. Her family wished her to take the veil; she would have preferred taking a husband. It so happened, however, that her heart was not actually engaged; and, in her distress, she had recourse to the advice of her confessor, Father Wolfert. What *his* motives or early counsels were, we do not profess to know; but be they what they might, they soon gave place to the strenuous recommendation that she should hearken to the wishes of one of the richest men of Flanders, and mingle the blood of the gallant family of Lovenskerke with that of the lately renovated house of Van Rozenhoed. To tell the result briefly, or, as we say commonly, "in short," Siger having submitted to a probationary year and a day, as was required by an ancient law of Bruges with respect to artizans, was nominated to the inferior dignity of Hoofman of St. Nicholas Sestendeelen, the part of the town in which he had hired a handsome

residence ; and having occupied this term of his noviciate in various improvements, mental and personal, he was on the same evening united to Maria de Lovenskerke, in the parish church, by his friend Father Wolfert, who was already advanced to the station of sub-prior of his convent.

In the course of another year the hoofman was promoted to be one of the thirteen *échevins*, or sheriffs, of the city—the Convent of Jacobines was built, endowed, and consecrated—the sub-prior regularly installed as confessor to the holy house and spiritual comforter of the abbess, and the twelve nuns who composed the sisterhood ; and his worship, the *echevin*, had become the father of a beautiful female child, who was christened with great distinction in the cathedral church of Notre Dame, by the name of Theresa ; the ceremony being performed by his reverence the sub-prior, and the infant being held at the font by the repre-

sentatives of two of the most ancient and distinguished families of Bruges.

Thus far affairs had gone on flourishingly with our friend Siger, and his friend Father Wolfert. The advances which they made in the world, had not, however, by any means, reached their term. Every day added to their importance in their respective situations; and while the monk's increasing greatness rose up towards his innate pride, the citizen made rapid progress in manners and knowledge, under the influence of a highly bred wife, and his own instinctive aptness to improve advantages. Secured in his possessions, and every day extending his influence in the city, it was evident that if ever the country succeeded in establishing its independence, he would be one of the first men (if not the very first man) of Bruges. And leaving our old acquaintance in this prosperous state, we now take a long leave of him, and his faithful ally, the Dominican.

CHAPTER III.

ALTHOUGH fifteen years form a long period in reality, they seem to present in retrospect a space but little wider than that which divides the close of our last chapter from the opening of this.

The concluding event there particularly specified, was the baptismal ceremony of our heroine that is to be, Theresa Van Rozenhoed ; but the progress of two or three years after that circumstance must be taken into account, to allow for her father's and his confessor's

advances in the world, alluded to in the final paragraph; so that, by the strict rules of calculation, we find our aforesaid heroine to be now eighteen years of age, and we resume our history in the spring of the year of grace 1600.

It was on a beautiful evening in the latter end of April in that year, that the newly elected chief burgomaster of the city of Bruges was sitting in a rustic arm chair, on the terrace of his garden, which looked upon the large square basin forming part of the canal, that extends from the cathedral of Notre Dame, in front of the Dyver and of Steen-Houwer's Dyk. In the unenclosed space which had formerly separated these two handsome quays, and directly opposite the basin on its southern side, another had of late years been built, and now joined them together. The houses of this new quay, which was no other than that referred to in our first pages, were of a cheerful construction, less massive and imposing than those at either

end. The architecture was light and simple ; and the new range formed a pleasing link, as it were, of the chain which it served to unite.

The burgomaster's house was situated on the eastern side of the basin, its front looking towards that point. The rear commanded one of the loveliest town views that any where existed. The garden was to the north of the mansion, and occupied a tolerably large space, which at this day is covered by the house, out-offices, and grounds of the tavern called *der Hollander*.

At the period of our story it was laid out with precious flowers and plants ; and the terrace before mentioned, extended for its whole western length. On the north side, the canal, which there branched off from the basin, separated it from that of the stadthouse, whose turrets rose proudly up and overlooked the scene we describe. The canal being narrow, the gardens were in a measure united, for the branches of the acacias, weeping willows, and other grace-

ful trees, hung over from both sides, and, interlacing together, formed a pleached canopy over the smooth stream (for it was such) that flowed drowsily, and almost imperceptibly beneath.

Beyond the house, eastward, was a larger space of open ground, now covered by the handsome fishmarket. But in *our* days, reader, this whole extent left an uninterrupted view of Steen-Houwer's Dyk on the right, and the picturesque buildings and gardens which still border the other side of the canal, including the rear of the Dominican cloister, of which the octagonal turrets, pointed gables, and square windows were seen above its tasteful, though somewhat sombre garden, which was terminated by a small arched doorway, opening directly on the canal.

To complete the description, we must once more return to the burgomaster's house, and give a short sketch of it, as it then appeared, and indeed may still be recognized. The walls were built of brick—the architraves, and frame-

work of doors and windows, of stone, curiously carved, according to the florid taste of the times. In front, a handsome porch was ascended by a flight of steps at each side; the balustrades richly ornamented, as was the front of the house, with much fantastic carving and gilding. The family arms were in various places ingeniously sculptured; and a marble figure of the Madonna, a correct but miniature copy from the celebrated statue by Michael Angelo (that graced the church of Notre Dame) was placed, in a niche over the principal entrance. A gilded balustrade surmounted the front of the house; above which peeped some half dozen unwieldy chimneys, and the pointed tops of two octagonal turrets, by which the mansion was flanked. These turrets rose up from, and were bathed by, the water of the basin. They stood out from the rear of the house, one at each of its extremities. From each of them a door opened on the narrow terrace already mentioned, and that to the

northward had also a communication with the garden. These turrets had been erected more for ornament than actual use ; but one of them was adapted by the burgomaster for special purposes of his trade ; the other, which was the one next the garden, being intended and fitted up for the accommodation of a tenant, of whom we shall presently speak more particularly.

We have thus minutely described the external appearance of the house and its appurtenances, which was admitted to be at the time, (and its appearance even now will justify the character,) the most elegant, though by no means the most sumptuous mansion in Bruges.

In full enjoyment of this enviable residence, in possession of immense wealth, and in all the honours of his long-sought, and but newly acquired dignity, the burgomaster sat as already mentioned. He was a man verging on fifty years, of a good presence, inclined to corpulence, and richly dressed ; he seemed, to some observers from the quay, to slumber : and a cu-

riously carved instrument appeared to sustain its position between his teeth at one end, and between his forefinger and thumb at the other, without any waking exertion of the burgo-master's will. But a nearer examination would have proved that his worship was absorbed in thought, not in sleep; while the vapour that escaped in gentle puffs through his lips, and the fragrance it diffused around, told that he indulged in the lately introduced luxury of smoking tobacco.

He gazed upon the glassy surface of the water, on which a couple of swans were floating; and his eyes glanced from time to time towards the long colonnade of poplars which lined the bank of the canal,—then seemed to look upon the high and clumsy steeple of the cathedral, or wandered back and rested on the spire of the town-hall, the cupola of the bishop's palace, or the turrets of the stadthouse. While thus occupied, the burgomaster's attention seemed suddenly excited towards the farther

end of the terrace, and rising from his chair, he folded his silk Chinese-patterned, and ermine-lined robe around him, put his crimson velvet cap on his head, and walked towards the place. He there perceived moving gently along, under the branching shade which covered the canal, the small boat belonging to the Dominican cloister, guided by a cowl-enveloped man, while the Prior reclined in a low chair at the stern, apparently not deigning to look on the humble pilot, who pushed the boat forward by means of a long pole.

The burgomaster, rightly judging that his reverend neighbour and friend was about to honour him with a visit, hastened down the flight of grey marble steps, which descended to the basin, and, bowing with an air of respectful familiarity to the churchman, he welcomed him, and handed him from the boat. A domestic, in rich livery, who attended at a distance for the burgomaster's call, now stepped forward, arranged a second seat beside that his

worship had just occupied, and then retired to his former position.

“Yes, your reverence is, as usual, cordially welcome,” said the magistrate. “May I pray you, holy Father, be seated. You do not, I humbly hope, feel incommoded by the odour of this far-fetched plant, the leaves of which fill my pipe.—Jans, quit the garden, and let no interruption be offered, while his reverence the Prior of St. Andrew’s sojourns here. Refuse admittance even to the echevins themselves.”

“My old and worthy ally,” replied the Prior, taking the magistrate’s hand, while the servant withdrew, “the vilest fumes from those we love are fragrant in the nostrils of friendship. How proud I am to see you thus—how rejoiced to hail you, *in fact* what I long since prophesied you would one day be !”

“Thanks to you, good Father ; my success is due to your steady zeal, and fervent intercession with the blessed St. Andrew, to whom all praise !”

“A good turn merits a return, kind friend,” said the priest. “The man whose wealth and worth made me four years ago prior of my convent, had a right to the benefit of my prayers, when so many obstacles lay in the way of his elevation to well merited honour !”

“Aye, Father, and nought else but piety and prayer from such as you could have beat down and discomfited my opponents. Ah, that vile Claas Claassen ! that outrageous demagogue ! how impotent were his wishes, and how deep his hypocrisy !”

“A miscreant heretic, my friend !—what was to be looked for at his hands but foul play ?”

“Why, your reverence knows what I think, at least what I thought, on *that* point ; and you must not suppose that my burgomaster’s robe, but yesterday thrown over me, has changed me in aught. As to heresy and the like, it is out of my calling—all men are equal in my eyes who look to the country’s good. My enemy, Claas Claassen, may worship God in his own

way, your reverence, for my part on't. I leave schismatics to the care of holy church—but I hate *him*, because I believe him to be a traitor to our liberties, and ready to sell even his own.”

“ Well, well, good burgomaster,” said the Prior, with a complacent smile, worthy of the deepest disciple of Loyola; “ I do know your honest, though somewhat narrow views, on points of faith and practice of forms. A true son of mother church, yourself, you wisely meddle not with matters beyond your comprehension; and well I trow, you have not forgotten the marvellous debt of gratitude you owe to our holy patron's intervention in your yesterday's election.”

“ Your reverence has never known me backward or ingrate; two massive candlesticks of purest and most fine-wrought gold, already stand prepared to add to the splendour of St. Andrew's altar !”

“ And the poor ?” said the monk, with the true tone of insatiate beggary.

“ Three bags of a thousand florins each, await your reverence’s disposal.”

“ They shall be well disposed of, my worthy son : and now the main points being adjusted, for piety and charity are our first duties, let us turn awhile to our poor personal concerns, and those of miserable sinners like ourselves. All promises fair for my designs ; the bishoprick must be mine—the archdukes have offered me the abbey of St. Donat’s, with all its rich appliances ; but no ! ’tis the mitre I want, and Prince Maurice and the states assure it to me. Once chosen Bishop of Bruges, and Hereditary Chancellor of Flanders, what obstacle may stop my career ?”

“ Heaven and St. Andrew grant your reverence success !”

“ *Money !* my good friend,” said the Prior, in a whisper, and pressing his companion’s hand.

“ That shall not fail,” said the burgomaster, in the same tone.

“Enough, enough, then, on that head. Now to my nephew’s case. Have you bethought you of my proposal?”

“I have, holy Father, with due consideration for your wishes—you know in such a case they are a law for me.”

“My too kind—but I spare you the expression of my gratitude; your honest nature needs no thanks. You will, then, take the boy as your apprentice, and reject more than a dozen solicitations from the sons and *protégés* of the first families in Flanders?”

“I have resolved to do so—nothing can make me swerve from a decision or a pledge. Your nephew’s indentures were drawn out and dated yesterday.”

“And when shall he enter on his duties? When begins the year’s noviciate, which has never failed to lead to honour and distinction? Fortunate nephew! too happy Lambert!”

“If the lad be prepared, he may enter on his functions to-morrow. His predecessor, young

Arneul de Grimberghe, gave up the turret yesterday, and to day he is sub-chamberlain to Prince Maurice."

"What! such a post already?"

"Yes, holy Father—such is the poor influence of an old gold-beater."

The Prior saw the well-known glance of pride that accompanied this affected humility. He had been for many a year used to humour it; and he did not fail to do so now.

"Did I not foretell," said he, with a smile, "that you would one day hold your head as high as the highest? This precious ring, which has never left my finger since the moment of the prophecy, be my token that I had a presentiment of your greatness. So, you now can obtain what peers and princes sue for in vain? Such is the value of humbleness joined with genius!"

The burgomaster knew well that he had no genius—that his outward humility was but the covering of inward pride—and that the chief

secret of his greatness lay in his money ; but he also felt that he had the merit of profiting by circumstances, and of not abusing good luck ; and the Prior's flattery fell unctuously on his spirit.

“ Aye,” resumed he, standing up erect, “ peers and princes do not disdain me—but my own town, good Father, this very Bruges, to which I have done *some* service, how has it treated me ? For ten years and more has it not refused my well earned honours ?”

“ Yes, my good friend, but you triumphed over all opponents yesterday ; you are now at the summit of your desires. You have now no cause of disquiet.”

“ True, as far as I alone am concerned ; but my daughter.”

“ And what of her ? Does not a splendid future open out for her ? Surpassing beauty, immense wealth, virtue, education—is not all hers, that earth can produce or heaven bestow ?”

“ 'Tis most true, yet the besetting dangers

of the world fill me with fears for my poor Theresa. Had her dear mother lived, my house would not have been till this day deprived of my daughter's presence," said the burgomaster, with a sigh, that sounded in accordance with his speaking tones.

"Well, well, worthy heart," answered the Prior, cheeringly, "your amiable wife is with the saints in Heaven. Your beautiful daughter will no more have to long for her father's home: she comes from the convent to-night? Isn't it so?"

This latter question was put with an expression something between doubt and disappointment, for the first was answered by an uncertain shake of the head.

"Why, how now, what has possessed you? Speak—does not Theresa bid farewell to the holy sisters of St. Anne this evening, and enter for the first time into possession of her rights, as only child and heiress to your house and wealth? You were resolved a week ago?"

“ Yes, reverend Father ; when, in the first impulse of astonishment and indignation, I discovered that the sacred convent, founded by myself, was no sanctuary against libertinism, I did resolve to remove my child to my own guardianship, and I have made preparations for her reception suitable to the station she is meant to fill in the world”—(here the burgo-master seemed to feel the influence of purse-proud excitement)—“ but when I consider that I am, perhaps, bringing her into all the temptations of public life, and even into a domestic snare ready baited by myself, I bethink me it may be wiser to leave her where she is, till the year of my magistracy and your nephew’s apprenticeship may have expired.”

“ You speak in parables, my friend ; I may not divine the meaning of snares and baits, coupled with your own and my nephew’s names.”

“ Then, to speak plainly, holy Sir, I compare my house to a trap, your nephew the bait,

myself the setter, and my dear Theresa an innocent dove, who may flutter into the danger, and be lost before she understands it."

"Aha! Is it so? Aye, aye, I comprehend you now; and well I perceive your wonted sagacity in these misgivings. But such anxieties are uncalled for, believe me. You have nought to fear on the score of my nephew, poor simple boy, who thinks but of study, retirement, and music, were there even any risk of the heiress of Van Rozenhoed disgracing her place in life, and the honours of her birth."

The burgomaster seemed to shuffle away from this latter allusion, by dwelling on the first.

"If your nephew be simple," said he, "my daughter is innocent; and simplicity and innocence form a dangerous conjunction, reverend Father."

"Nay, nay, good friend, we must not pervert caution into cowardice, nor turn our backs

to the light, for the sake of making shadows to be scared by. See the thing as it is. To do justice to your daughter you ought to introduce her into life, during your year of dignity. Not to do so, were to mar all those views of a noble alliance which I know your heart is bent on. Keep her still in the obscurity of her convent for this critical year, and in the next you may see her wed the son of your old foe, Claas Claassen the tanner !”

“ Wed the son of Claas Claassen !—of him, the factious old hide-wetter ! never, never ! I would sooner see her stretched a corpse at my feet—and him pickled in one of his own tan-pits. No, no ; my girl must wed with honour. The whole hope of my life — the vision of my prosperity has been such, she shall not sully the blood of—of—of De Lovenskerke, nor the *name* of Roozen !”

“ Of Van Rozenhoed, my too modest friend,” chimed in the Prior, who often found it neces-

sary to curb the citizen's impetuous candour. "Then, now is your time," continued he. "Starting into life in all the splendour which you can throw around your magistracy, seeing and being seen by the first in the land, with all her charms of person, and fortune unlimited, who may not claim the hand of Theresa, and be honoured by the gift? By the way, we may hope that Prince Maurice himself will be soon master of our city again. Were the Spaniards driven out once more—as, St. Andrew be pleased, they will—the prince will march in triumphant."

"And what then?" asked the burgomaster, almost breathlessly, as one who gazes on the peak of some sublime mountain, which looks beyond his reach, but which he *feels* to be within it.

"What then? Why all the young nobles of Holland, and many of Flanders and Brabant, will follow in his train, will be your

guests, your gossips, your fellows, aye, and the suitors of your daughter, that's all."

"My best counsellor, my own true friend!" cried the burgomaster, "your reasoning is worthy of Solomon. You have decided, and what is more, *convinced* me. Theresa comes home to-night; her apartments are in readiness: the whole of this turret close by is hers. That of the apprentice yonder is for the service of your nephew."

"Thank heaven, you have decided wisely!" answered the Prior, not thinking it necessary to conceal his satisfaction. "And now that your own clear sense has put you in the right way for your daughter's welfare, I will remove all possibility of qualms on the subject of your new apprentice, by letting you see who and what he is."

With these words, the Prior gathered up his white serge robes about him, and stepping forward on the terrace, he leaned over the

balustrade, and called out, "Lambert Boonen ! Lambert ! Nephew ! Come hither, sirrah, and know thy worshipful master, the chief magistrate of Bruges."

The burgomaster was somewhat astonished to see the pilot of the little boat, which lay moored at the foot of the steps, fling off his monk's cowl at these words, and ascend to the garden with a timid and awkward air.

"Nay, reverend Prior," exclaimed he, "this was ill done, to keep the youth a waiting. It is not thus I would have shewn dishonour to your sister's son."

"Had he been my brother's, worthy friend, to wait thy pleasure and leisure would have honoured him. He has learned to attend on his betters. You know he was meant for the church, but Heaven had not set his heart on its service ; and he follows a new, and (not offensively is it spoken) a profane ambition for worldly advancement and distinction. The laws of our renovated,

and soon to be liberated, country, are now his sole study; and under your patronage, he justly reckons on the highest honours they may lead to."

"My interest and influence is, as your reverence knows, entirely devoted to your service; and although the career of arms has been chiefly the choice of my apprentices, still diplomacy and judicature have not been without their aspirants, from among the youths who have hitherto worked in the goldbeater's turret."

The Prior now haughtily beckoned for the youth to come forward. He had waited on the terrace, till he saw this summons. He then advanced, and stood before the religious and civil dignitaries with eyes cast on the ground. He was dressed in a plain black jerkin, and short cloak of the same; he wore a falling collar instead of the high-starched ruff worn by almost all men of condition; his unslashed breeches had knots of black ribbon at the

knees ; and his shoes of buff leather, were fastened with corresponding ties. A black silk cap, such as was worn by professors and students in those days, closely covered his head ; and the little grey hat which he held in his hands had not even the decoration of a cock's feather.

The burgomaster saw, or fancied he saw, at a glance, that this was a person nothing dangerous ; and he inwardly congratulated himself that his choice of an inmate to his house, had fallen on such a contrast to the high-born and impetuous youths who had heretofore been his protégés. He asked a few questions of his new apprentice, as to his tastes and studies.

“ Music, and the laws,” were the laconic and modestly-spoken replies.

“ And when, my young friend, would you feel inclined to enter on your new pursuits ?”

“ When it pleases your worship and my uncle ; but if I might crave a few days from

the present to allow me to make some befitting additions to my wardrobe and my stock of books, I would esteem myself much favoured."

"Prettily spoken, youngster; with a proper sense of duty and affection. Your reverence must decide; I am satisfied with the boy's arrangement."

"Be it so then," said the Prior; "and now, Lambert," addressing the young man, "now that I have introduced thee to the first citizen of Bruges, thou mayest really feel thyself launched into life. Thou hast made the first step towards the great object of thy desires. In a week thou enterest on a station sought for and sure to be envied by some of the proudest of the land. Hold thy ground firmly, my lad, for perils may beset thee. The disappointed look on success as a crime; and revenge is twin brother to envy. Thy duties here are easily learned: thou wilt implicitly follow the instructions of thy master; thou

wilt know thy station and keep it. Respect this distinguished citizen as thy patron. Have thine ears only for his words, thine eyes for his gestures, thy words for his service—but be deaf, blind, and dumb for every thing else ; and, above all things, never listen, look, or speak to aught that inhabits this turret, opposite to thine own.”

“ To so profoundly sensible a discourse,” said the burgomaster, “ I can add but little ; but this I will say, gentle youth, begin your business boldly, continue it steadily, and prosper ! Take the hammer in your hand, like an honest gold-beater, and you may find, perhaps, that you are striking the nail of good fortune right on the head.”

After the delivery of these lectures, the youth bowed low ; and then, by the Prior’s orders, retreated to the boat. He wrapped his monk’s cassock around him, and took the guiding pole in his hand ; and in a few minutes both he and his reverend freight were

again gliding down the canal in the direction of the Dominican cloister.

The burgomaster, after many friendly and respectful farewells, retired into his house.

CHAPTER IV.

THE conference just recorded will have told the reader a good deal of what we ourselves know relative to the personages who figured in it ; but some things require detail, which shall be condensed into the smallest possible compass, with due consideration to the impatience of hearers and readers, when a speaker stands up, or a writer sits down, " in explanation."

Siger Van Rozenhoed, though deeply tinged with the belief in " fate and metaphysical aid," common to his time, had none of the intoler-

ance of his sect. His character was one of those which mark strongly the difference between superstition and bigotry, and seem to prove them incompatible with each other. Superstition, dealing wholly with the vague and visionary, carries the mind beyond the tangible limits by which bigotry is bounded. Expanse and narrowness are their respective distinctions. Superstition loves to dissolve, as it were, the solidity of reason itself: its notions of nature are but the shadows of thought, which is formed by bigotry into material shapes, all hard, crude, and repulsive. Van Rozenhoed looked with awe on the mysteries of his religion; he honoured its agents and obeyed its forms, but his veneration went no farther. He could fix no creed for himself on the needle points of sectarian distinctions, nor hate another for his incapacity to comprehend them, any more than for his disability to count the stars. Had his mind, in short, been wholly absorbed by re-

ligion, he might have been inflated into fanaticism ; but he never could have sunk into bigotry.

It has been seen that he had prospered in life as completely as he deserved to do, but that he had found the cup of prosperity occasionally drugged with the bitters which mix with even its sweetest draught. He had lost, after a few years, the wife whose judgment had consolidated all his plans, and whose rank, elegance, and good taste, had thrown a graceful veil across his coarse but solid worth. Siger, with an intuitive aptness for distinctions, very soon adapted himself to those which his wealth and marriage procured, and he was quickly able to pass muster, without any betrayal of unnecessary facts, with those to whose equality he was admitted by the alleged privilege of his birth, but in the evident right of his money. He had soon silenced the clamours of all disputants to his property. Fortunately for him the accidental burning, in the year

1450, of the tower in which the records and charters of the town had been deposited, destroyed the means by which chicanery itself could have long withstood the influence of his own purse, and of Father Wolfert's exertions. He was regularly, and beyond all future cavil, confirmed in the possession of the lands he had purchased ; and he then commenced a series of improvements and speculations, with a spirit rarely equalled in the most prosperous times, and, at the disturbed epoch of his proceedings, without any parallel. His enterprises were not confined to the city : he was the chief mover of the plan which ended in the formation of the splendid canal between Bruges and Ghent, which the jealousy of the latter town had long counteracted. Siger had a share in almost every undertaking of moment by the great companies of Antwerp ; and he was secretly concerned in the chief contracts and loans for the services of the states of Holland during a considerable part of their

long contest against Spain, now happily drawing to a close. The immense increase of fortune acquired by his activity and skill was, however, freely shared with individuals and his country. He had lent many a large sum to private friends; and in all matters of necessity, he contributed to the public wants, on terms which put to shame the base monopolists and usurers of those days. By such means he had acquired a high character and influence with the leading patriots. The great Prince of Orange knew him well; and his heroic son, Prince Maurice, after his succession to his murdered father's rank and fame, had many a time recourse to the aid of Van Rozenhoed's ever ready purse, although personally unacquainted with him; and he recompensed his public and private worth by a prompt attention to his recommendations, which were always preferred to those of the intriguers by whom the prince was beset.

The government of the city of Bruges had

been for some years, almost ever since it was betrayed to the Spaniards by the Count of Arschot, confided to Don Juan de Trovaldo, an officer of considerable merit, who had practised the study of his art under the notorious Alva, and continued it under the celebrated Duke of Parma. He was appointed to his present command by the latter general, and had proved himself a staunch adherent to the tyranny of Spanish rule on many trying occasions. But for several years previous to the epoch now under notice, he had but little opportunity of displaying his military talents, being left in the quiet possession of the city, which he governed in the name of the new sovereign, the Arch-Duke Albert and his wife Isabella, the daughter of Philip II. of Spain, before whose death, even, they entered on their possession of those parts of Belgium which had re-submitted to his sway.

Bruges had for a considerable interval been freed from the presence of the conflicting

armies, and only suffered its share of the general privations to which the towns of Flanders were subject; while some of the Dutch provinces, and the southern counties of Brabant, were scourged with the actual miseries of war. It was owing to this state of armed inaction that a fair field was open to the party intrigues of such men as Claas Claassen, and the patriotic undertakings of Siger Van Rozenhoed. The uncertainty of the struggle in which these countries were involved had at length softened down the spirit of the contest, and men's interests accomplished what humanity could not. Conciliation was found a better instrument than cruelty. The towns in the possession of the Spaniards were therefore ruled with a milder sway. The exercise of the reformed worship was privately allowed, though prohibited by law, in violation of the peace of religion published at Ghent in 1578. Liberty of ingress and egress was permitted to the burgesses, and to persons carrying certificates

signed by the magistrates; so that the commerce of the patriotic, as well as the Spanish party, with their several friends, was but little interrupted.

In the city of Bruges these parties were nearly equal; for the weight of intelligence and respectability on the side of freedom, balanced the apparent preponderance of numbers, ignorance, and bigotry. Among the steadiest of the patriots was Siger Van Rozenhoed—among the most clamorous Claas Claassen. The former, though a staunch Catholic, could never be reconciled to the Spanish sway, having in the early burst of liberty enjoyed its sweets. His opponent in civic honours, a tolerated reformer, hated the oppressors of his country and his conscience; yet neither of these men would consent to adopt the privilege which was open to all, of quitting Bruges and settling in Holland. They were both too much attached to the place of

their birth, the scene of their prosperity, and the source of their importance.

Claas Claassen had been long the avowed enemy of Siger Van Rozenhoed. In the very opening of the latter's career, Claas had opposed him. He was himself, at that time, one of the wealthiest men in Bruges; and envy at the greater riches of the lucky gold-beater was the first cause of his hostility, which was strengthened by Siger's marriage, and his admission into the honours of nobility and ancestry. It was through Claas Claassen's influence that the old and obsolete law was put in force, which refused to all working mechanics admission into the civic offices, until the expiration of a year after their manumission; and by a long series of intrigues, he succeeded in retarding Siger's advances beyond the insignificant post of Hoofman of his section, and his being named one of the thirteen echevins, for a period quite inconsistent with

the functionary's wealth and character. Siger's pride in his own consequence would not condescend to meet this opposition by the unworthy methods which upheld it. He never sought an honour or asked for a suffrage, but waited with an irritated forbearance, which he fancied to be dignity, until offered the place which he would not solicit. Many of his fellow townsmen and acquaintances understood this temper, and being quite sure that no apparent slight would abate his efforts for the good of the city, they negatively participated in the injustice done him, until their own private interests became, by degrees, dependent on his good offices and involved in his promotion. Thus he, at length, obtained, at unusually long intervals, honour after honour, and finally came to be what we now know him for, chief burgomaster of the city.

Siger's main fault was the pride of seeming humble; and it was most strongly exemplified by a peculiarity which might be gathered from

his conversation with the Prior of St. Andrew's, recorded in the last chapter. His shrewdness had, even in the first days of his good fortune, told him to what he would be exposed, from the jealousies and malice of those who witnessed his sudden elevation, if he strove (as is too common with the low born), to stifle the memories of others, by a seeming forgetfulness of himself. He therefore resolved to make it his apparent glory to be what he really was; to acknowledge it on all occasions; to boast of it as an enhancement of his growing greatness; and, even in the ranks of nobility itself, to adopt the very insignia of his trade. We have seen that he had quartered three hammers in his coat of arms. The same instrument was stamped on all his articles of plate and furniture; his portrait was painted, with a hammer in the right hand, by one Rubens, a young artist whom he patronised, and whose painting, had it but survived, would have given to Van Rozenhoed a lease of immortality, as long as is

granted to canvass and colouring. But he marked his early situation in life still more strongly than by its emblem. He signed his name on all occasions,

ZEGHER VAN ROZENHOED,

Goud Slagher.

and to keep up the more decided avowal of his trade, he openly professed its practice, and kept in his constant employment, *an apprentice*.

It need hardly be told that this office was a sinecure, and all this semblance of artizanship, but a quaint device to neutralize the reflections of envy and malice. Among citizens, like those of Bruges, and with the habits and opinions of the times, it had its full effect ; nor did it offer the least dishonour to Siger in the class into which he had gained admission. On the contrary, his happy thought of retaining a *protégé*, under the assumed appointment of apprentice, became the means of binding him more closely

with many of the most distinguished families of Flanders. His patronage, as has been already stated, was the sure means of advancing these youths to honour and dignity ; and their nominal descent into the ranks of trade for one year, was looked on like the habit of a masquerader, adopted for some serious purpose, which was forwarded by the mummery of a night. Above a dozen young men had filled this situation. It had been unsuccessfully sought for by scores. The rejected applicants and their friends formed, as might be supposed, so many enemies to Van Rozenhoed ; and at the time of his appointment to the magistracy, he had to encounter all the enmity of inevitable disappointments.

But when it was publicly known that Lambert Boonen, the hitherto unheard-of nephew of the Prior, had succeeded to the appointment, the rage of the rejected factions was unbounded. All parties joined in a league of annoyance against the burgomaster, in open designs

against his apprentice, and in smothered hatred towards his confessor. The object of the latter was universally pronounced to be the making a match between his nephew and the burgo-master's daughter, whose approaching introduction to the world was known to every one, and whose wealth and beauty made her a mark for all the fathers, and mothers, and sons of the country.

Within an hour after the conference between Van Rozenhoed and the Prior, whom the reader must have recognized as his old acquaintance Father Wolfert, Theresa, the object of so much public and domestic interest, arrived at her father's mansion, then called Rozenhoed House. She was brought there from the convent by the abbess herself, and accompanied by her own faithful attendant Nona, who had (on her mother's death, ten years before), entered with her the sanctuary, where she received her education, and now left it with her, to watch

over her in the world for which it had been meant to prepare her. This woman, like most of those to whom the care of children is confided, was immoderately attached to her charge ; and there was no peril she would not risk, no sacrifice she would not make, for Theresa, *provided* she was sure of the approval of Father Wolfert, her confessor and patron—(we might almost have said patron *saint*), for her devotion to him was without limitation. It was through his recommendation she had entered the family of Van Rozenhoed, immediately on his marriage ; and from the hour of Theresa's birth she had been her nurse, in all things, exclusive of that holiest of duties which nature has confided to the mother's breast.

When Van Rozenhoed was left a widower, and Theresa, in the tenderest sense, an orphan, it was resolved, by the advice of Father Wolfert, then sub-prior of his cloister, to place the child with the sisters of St. Anne, for education and accomplishments suited to the distinguished

station to which her father destined her. Father Wolfert had never mentioned his nephew, nor made application for the *apprenticeship*, until he had calculated the certainty of Van Rozenhoed's appointment as burgomaster, on which occasion it was decided between them, that Theresa should quit the convent and return to her father's house. The chief motives for these measures with regard to her, have been already mentioned. Those of the Prior, in respect of the new apprentice, required no sifting, at least in the opinions of the baffled candidates for the place.

Theresa had received such an education at the hands of the sisterhood, as was usual in such establishments as theirs. She was better informed in the various branches of knowledge than girls educated at home; and in the common accomplishments of those days, her natural taste ensured a proficiency more than usual. She was brought up in strict notions of piety; and the doctrine of passive obedience to her

father's and her confessor's will was rigidly inculcated. For all matters appertaining to this life, she was instructed to rely on the former; for all that related to another and a better world, Father Wolfert was pointed out as an infallible guide. On these points of belief, Theresa was a true Catholic. She considered herself born for her father's will, as far as worldly concerns were in question; and she became imbued with the feeling, that whenever she might quit the convent and return home, it was for the purpose of making a marriage with some one of high distinction, to be chosen by her father, and, as a matter of course, accepted by her. This notion gradually seemed to make a part of her mind, as if it sprung up there self-formed; and the ambitious pride which she inherited from her father, as her chief and almost her only fault, involuntarily cherished the idea of a high alliance.

During Theresa's occasional days of release from her convent duties, she saw some of the

best society of Bruges, her father's house being frequented by no other. These visits gave her a superficial acquaintance with the world, and a tone of manners superior to what she would have contracted in unbroken seclusion. All persons were excluded on these occasions by the wary Van Rozenhoed, who might at all counteract his own views as to his daughter's establishment. But Theresa soon discovered that she was an object of curiosity and even of admiration ; and she was not at all displeased to observe, that while she sailed in her father's boat on the canal, drove in his carriage through the streets, or leant over the garden balustrade to feed the swans in the basin below, she was followed and gazed at by several young men ; and she was best pleased with the looks of those the most richly dressed, and of the proudest mien.

“ Ah, dearest Beatrice,” said our heroine one evening, to her chosen friend, a Spanish novice, as they paced a shaded walk in the convent

garden, which now flourished in the wide extent of what was formerly the waste ground of Savenslacht House ; “ ah, my friend, how I pant for the hour that is to see my entry into the world ! My only regret will be given to thee ; the good abbess and the sisters, all are contented here ; but thou, dear Beatrice, even on this eve of thy solemn vows, thou art not ! Nay, do not start nor blush, even though I have penetrated thy secret.”

“ My *secret*, Theresa !” exclaimed the young novice, with a deeper blush, and an accent of alarm.

“ Pardon me, Beatrice, I should have said thy secret wishes. I meant not to reproach thee with the duplicity of keeping aught else from my confidence ; and *those* I know it is thy duty to conceal even from thyself.”

“ I doubt much the virtue of that doctrine,” answered Beatrice. “ I have followed it till my heart has nearly burst—my feelings must have vent—I want a confidant—I have fixed on

thee, Theresa—I have not doubted nor delayed, for this is the moment for avowal, and thy remark leads to it. Wilt thou hearken to me? Thou art not wrong in thy suspicions—I am indeed discontented, but not unhappy. These walls, this dress, my present duties, are all hateful—those intended for me are horrible !”

The dark eyes of the novice flashed as she uttered these words, and her commanding figure rose to its utmost height. Theresa could scarcely bear to look upon her; and with a half averted face, she said,

“ You terrify me, Beatrice. This is wonderful, indeed—surely thou dost not mock me, my best friend ?”

The inquiring and suppliant tone of this question softened the novice, and she could not restrain her tears.

“ Alas, alas !” cried she, “ I am in no mood for mockery—I grieve to part from thee—I want thy advice—no, not that exactly—but thy

pity, thy consolation, an attentive ear to my confession, a kind heart when thou hast heard it. Wilt thou give me these? Do not refuse me, Theresa. The day may come when thou mayst want such for thyself."

"Speak on, speak on, dear Beatrice. I am shocked and grieved at this distress. What can it mean?"

"Why, this, Theresa—but let me hold thy hand, lest thou wouldst shun me—I *love*, deeply and devoutly."

"Well!" exclaimed Theresa, with a beaming look and close pressure of her friend's hand—"well! and what then? Is this all that agitates thee, and makes thee wretched? Thou lovest! I know thou dost, thy guardian, thy brother, *me*. Our holy church cannot be jealous of such love."

"Amiable, and happily innocent Theresa! But I must undeceive thee now. The love I speak of, is for a different object far than those, Theresa. They are all sanctified

and pure affections—but that *other* is a passion deep, and they would persuade us unholy. It is that fire which, they say, consumes its votaries—in itself a Heaven that but leads us, they pretend, to hell. The man I love, Theresa—”

“What, Beatrice, what hast thou said! Thou lovest *a man*—and he neither brother, nor parent, nor guardian! The holy saints preserve us both! How couldst thou confess, or how could I listen to aught so monstrous! Why, even in *me*, destined for the world, and for whom marriage is a duty, it would be criminal to give my heart without my father’s will—but in thee, devoted to Heaven, and on the very point of taking the vows!”

“Theresa, I expected this. Thy innocent mind reveres these maxims, which mine scoffs at and rejects. Thou art a Fleming, by nature cold, by feeling and education a Catholic. I am a Moriscoe, warm and glowing as the climate of my birth-place, and by very instinct of

the faith of my fathers. My native Andalusian vale, the memory of my days of childhood, my parents' enthusiasm, the words of the prophet, all have imbued my mind with what only wanted the excitement of love, to transform me from the willing slave you have known me, to the enfranchised being I am now."

"Holy St. Anne, how can I answer this?" exclaimed Theresa, clasping her hands, and throwing on the novice a look of grief and astonishment. "How will your guardian, the governor, hear it?"

"My guardian! The governor!" replied Beatrice, with a bitter sneer. "What care I? When he hears it, if thou betrayest me not, I shall be far from his base displeasure and baser designs, in the care of one who loves and will protect me. Nay, my Theresa, do not look so harshly on me, nor shrink from my embrace. Pity me the rather—and only see in me a woman, weak in feeling, perhaps, but strong in

purpose ; unfortunate from her birth, a slave in infancy, doomed to escape from one tyranny but by sacrificing herself to another—and at length finding freedom from both in the dictates of nature and the enthusiasm of love.”

“ I understand thee not, Beatrice—thou knowest I do not—neither thy allusions nor thy wild, and, I fear, unhallowed, feelings. Yet I love thee truly, my chosen and most dear friend ! I would do all things in virtue and duty for thee. I am almost stunned by thy strange words ; but if hearkening to them, with all my mind intent upon thy good, can soothe or serve thee, go on, go on ; unburthen thyself to me—but do not, I implore thee, say aught which thy holy state forbids, and which a simple maiden may not virtuously hear.”

“ What dost thou take me for, Theresa ? Heaven knows I love and cherish thee too well to wound thee in word or thought. Come this way, then, under the shelter of these lime trees. Sister Jaquelina yonder, even at her prayers,

old crone that she is, hath eyes and ears for less venerable sinners than herself.”

Theresa suffered herself to be led onwards by her friend, though shocked at the tone of levity which, in reference to the pious old nun, had succeeded to the license of her former speech.

“ Now, then, my friend,” resumed Beatrice, “ hearken to one part of my history, which thou hast yet to learn. Hitherto thou hast known me but as the ward of Don Juan de Trovaldo, the governor of this town ; destined for a convent, by my own choice, and placed here by my own consent. Learn now that I am not his ward, and he, Heaven knows, has never stretched a guardian hand across me. I was his *slave*, Theresa—purchased by my father’s blood—by my mother’s shame. Trovaldo was the murderer of the one, and the violator of the other. He, when a mere youth, accompanied one of those fierce bands let loose by the tyrant Philip into the strong holds of the Apulxara hills, to pursue the remnants of our race with fire and

sword, and lead the sad survivors into slavery. My father fell by his hand. My mother's youth and beauty spared her to fill the murderer's arms, until grief brought her to her early grave; and my brother and myself were doomed to remain the servitors of him who had such claims on our—hatred. My brother, whom you have seen at the grate, Gaspar, as they *christened* him, but whose true and early name is Aben Farez, the last descendant of a race of chieftains, is to this day his *slave*. I grew up, Theresa, as you see me, with form and features too like, alas! to my wretched mother's not to excite the vile desires of my master. He reared me for the hateful honour of supplying the place he had forced my mother to fill, and with the grossness of his soldier-mind he strove to train mine away from all the true charms of womanhood. My education better suits me for a camp than a convent. I can wield a lance easier than a bodkin; and can curb a horse better than I count a rosary. Need I tell thee

that, with the earliest dawn of knowledge, I loathed Trovaldo? That abhorrence seemed to force my mind into unusual ripeness. I understood his views, when other girls older than myself could not comprehend them. I will not shock thee with the recital of all that followed ; but every art of seduction, every attempted violence failed ; and Trovaldo had no alternative but to force me into this convent, sure that his power over the abbess would leave me at his mercy, when I had finally renounced the world, and was beyond my brother's aid. To him I have never exposed Don Juan's designs. I left that for my last resource ; and trusted to fate to free me without endangering him. Here I have spent a year, that would have been intolerable, had I not found in thee, Theresa, a spirit, not congenial indeed to mine, but one that it could commune with ; and I here met *him* who has given my life new worth, in giving it an *object*. Here, Theresa, in this garden, night after night, while thou hast slept in thy

little chamber, happy and undisturbed, and while the poor sisters have drawled out their drowsy orisons, I have crept from my cell and met my lover, who stole in, disguised as a pilgrim, interchanging words of powerful import, till the dawn has found us unconscious that the night was past."

"You make me shudder, Beatrice. What words are these you utter? Good God! do you forget that to-morrow you take the vows—to-morrow enter for ever into the bosom of the church?"

"Never, never, Theresa! no vow shall ever pass these regenerated lips—no tie, save love, and feeling, shall ever bind me!"

"Cruel, cruel Beatrice, why have you told me this—why made me a party in your criminal thoughts! My blood is chilled while you speak; and yours, Beatrice, seems visibly boiling through your swollen veins, and burning in your cheeks."

"It is, indeed, Theresa; thou readest me

well. Excitement is at the highest pitch. My bosom swells—my brain ferments. But call me not cruel in my confidence. It is to prove my love for thee, to save thee from other fears on my account, that I tell thee this. She who has been my only friend shall not at least accuse me of duplicity towards her. Thou knowest me now, Theresa—at last—at *the* last; the end of our friendship, perhaps—but the opening of my existence. I now begin to live; and thou, Theresa, thou too wilt soon quit these gloomy walls to enter the world, and shine in all the purity of what it calls virtue, and (what it values more) in all the brilliancy of wealth. Mine is another course, more free, but—”

“ Oh, Beatrice! For Heaven’s sake, for thine own, what dost thou mean? I tremble while I ask thee. Thou talkest of thy lover—he will be thy *husband*? Since thou wilt brave the dangers of thy course, it will be with unstained honour, surely? Say so, I beseech thee!”

“ I scorn to deceive thee, my friend. The man I fly with *cannot* be my husband—he has sworn to marry another.”

“ Enough, enough, Beatrice—no more, my friend, indeed ! Lost as thou art, resolutely, wilfully lost, I can no longer look on thee—but I will not betray thee — may Heaven forgive thee ! yet it is not too late. Pause but one day—bethink thee well—I have no words to urge thee back to duty, but thine own strong mind will speak to thee. Thou hast been wildered in a maze of evil thoughts ; but thy soul is now unburthened of its secret load. Reflect, then—reflect.”

“ Hush, hush ! here comes the Abbess. Not a word or look between us—go towards the house, Theresa ; I do not say farewell, we shall meet again—go, go.”

With these words the novice pressed Theresa's hands to her lips, and then hurried into the shrubbery. Theresa, not less agitated, hastened by another path into the chapel ;

witnessed, but scarcely heard, the vesper service; then sought her chamber, and sunk on a chair, in a bewildered reverie. The discourse of Beatrice had given rise to a world of new sensations. The facts relating to her life; Trovaldo's baseness; the desperate design she had formed; but, above all, the passion she avowed for some unknown object, in terms so passionate and so unmeasured, called up a crowd of ideas, too confused to attain the circumstance of thought.

She sat in this state of musing till the shades of night had quite closed in, and neither moon nor stars threw light across the heavens, nor formed shadows upon earth. The garden was a mass of gloom; and a heavy breeze swept through the sultry air, and lazily shook the branches of the lime trees and elms. The convent clock struck ten. Theresa started in surprise, when she counted the strokes. All was silent in the house. Not a lamp glimmered from a single casement, save that of the infr-

mary, where two of the nuns lay, watched by one of the poor sisters, whose duty it was to attend the sick of this and other religious houses, or of the poor citizens, equally with those of their own.

When Theresa recovered her thoughts sufficiently to form them into some purpose, her first impulse was to seek Beatrice, and by all the reasoning she could command to dissuade her from the design she had so imperfectly announced. She accordingly quitted her chamber, and stole on tip-toe to the door of the novice's cell. A little lamp, glimmering at the distant end of the corridor, shewed her the door, and her heart sunk on perceiving that it was open. She however entered, and was soon convinced that the cell was empty. The bed was unoccupied and everything in confusion. The dress of the novice lay upon the floor; and as Theresa groped around, her feet struck against several small articles. Among others which she stooped to pick up was the

crucifix of ebony, which used to hang at Beatrice's girdle, and which she had thus flung behind her, as if to mark her contempt for the faith which she renounced and fled from. Such was the notion which struck Theresa, but even the shock which it caused did not chill the generous impulse that prompted her to seek her friend, while a chance remained of interposing one appeal between her and ruin.

She accordingly left the cell, and with cautious haste descended to the little postern door that opened on the garden. She trembled at the idea of unbolting this door, fearing the noise might disturb the portress, who slept close by; but as she came on tip-toe towards it, she felt the night air upon her face and neck, and she found that all obstacle to her egress had been removed. Stooping beneath the archway she stepped into the garden, and hurried along from path to path, in the almost hopeless chance of discovering the fugitive.

She at length reached the wall, at that side of the garden which was bounded by the waste grounds lying towards the old gate of St. James. A rustling in the shrubs did not alarm her, but urged her, on the contrary, to examine them closely. She two or three times uttered in a loud whisper the name of Beatrice; the rustling of the leaves ceased, and no sound answered her.

“ Oh, Beatrice! my dear friend,” said she, in a somewhat more audible tone, “ I implore thee to answer me, if indeed thou art not gone, not lost for ever. Beatrice, Beatrice !”

A figure immediately emerged from the shrubs; but Theresa started back, for she thought it was that of a man.

“ Shrink not, Theresa—it is me, Beatrice : I am but disguised in apparel, not changed in mind or purpose. I am on the point of flight. Thanks to thy kind heart for this last proof of friendship—farewell—farewell !—See, he is descending the ladder.”

“ Who, Beatrice? what ladder?” asked Theresa in alarm.

“ My lover, Theresa—that ladder of cord which leads to liberty—farewell, dearest girl! Be happy, and remember me!”

With these words she embraced her affrighted friend, who could not resist a feeling that made her shrink, as Beatrice’s arms, in their male apparel, were cast round her.

A man now sprang from the wall, of a light and graceful form, as well as Theresa could observe. He took Beatrice by the hand; and murmuring a few words, his dagger’s blade was visible to our heroine, who stood transfixed to the spot, without power to move or speak.

“ ’Tis nothing to be alarmed at,” said Beatrice, catching the man’s uplifted hand, “ ’tis only my friend Theresa, of whom we have so often spoken, who has accompanied me in this perilous hour. Theresa, dearest, fear nothing,” added she, turning to the trembling girl, and warmly pressing her hand, “ this is no time for cere-

mony ; a hurried presentation must be all I can afford to either, and the name of *one* I dare not mention. You may know him yet, Theresa, but now that must not be. Here, take her chill hand in yours, as a token of future friendship—and now to mount the ladder ; I feel that all must be secure that leads to liberty. Farewell, farewell, Theresa !”

While Beatrice had been uttering this speech, her lover had firmly fixed the ends of his rope ladder in the earth ; and, as she fearlessly and actively ascended the wall, he obeyed her direction, by taking Theresa’s powerless hand in his. He pressed it to his heart ; and while her various emotions rendered her totally passive, he caught her round the waist, held her close to him, and imprinted kiss after kiss, not on her cheeks, as Beatrice had done, but on her lips and her heaving bosom, which was exposed to his licentious daring. He spoke not a word ; and when at length Beatrice called to him from the other side of the wall, which she had safely descended, he loosed

Theresa from his embrace, and placed her gently on a bench that stood in the shade of the trees close to which this scene had been acted. He in a moment gained the top of the wall, and drew up the ladder ; and Theresa heard the active bound with which he reached the earth beyond. She started from her seat—rushed to the convent—and reaching her own room, she fastened the door, and flung herself on her bed, in an overwhelming tumult of feeling. The personal insult she had suffered revolted and terrified her. In its recollection every thing else seemed forgotten ; the criminality of Beatrice, the sacrilege of her lover, and the involuntary share which she herself had borne in each. Her agitation ended in a flood of tears, which had their source in wounded pride and outraged delicacy, and which deluged, but could not assuage them.

“ Lost, unfortunate Beatrice,” cried she, when her feelings could turn into another channel, “ guilty, without one solace for thy guilt ! for

what canst thou expect from the man who, in the very moment of thy abandonment of all for him, could give loose to the libertine impulse that another woman inspired !”

The sensation excited by Beatrice’s flight may be easily imagined. The convent was next morning the scene of consternation and alarm, which soon spread to all the other religious establishments in the city ; thence to the private houses and public places ; and the unusual event became the absorbing topic of conversation, misrepresentation, and calumny. The Protestant party made the most of so fair a subject of scandal against their Catholic masters ; and *they*, in their turn, denounced the heretic citizens *en masse*, as the instigators of the sacrilege, which must, it was maintained, have been effected by some one of their body. The priests thundered and anathematized, the Prior of the Dominicans more loudly than the rest. The civil authorities of the town put every engine of discovery into action. But the most violent and most power-

ful, as well as the most interested of all who interfered, was Don Juan de Trovaldo, the governor. His rage was beyond all bounds ; he saw himself baffled in his malice, as he had been in his desires. The intended victim to his worst passions had escaped them all, and another had snatched away in an hour what he had for years struggled to possess. He issued a proclamation, dooming death to the criminals ; and the bishop added his fiat, which faithfully promised them damnation. But besides these dubiously prophetic denouncements, every possible inducement of reward, here and hereafter, was held out to all who might discover the attainted pair, and hand them over to justice.

Along with the many agents engaged by these inducements, was one instigated by sentiments far different. The prospect of wealth and promise of salvation presented no temptation to him, for he despised and hated the sources which had thus proclaimed them. Liberty and vengeance were the spurs that urged him on. The

first was solemnly sworn to him by Trovaldo, the latter he vowed to himself. This person was Gaspar, as he was commonly named, but, in his own calling, Aben Farez, the Moriscoe, Beatrice's brother, and the governor's slave.

The first object of reasonable suspicion, on whom the various efforts of these parties could fix, was Renault Claassen, the youngest son of Claas Claassen, the tanner. This young man was seen by several of the citizens in the close vicinage of the convent, on the night of Beatrice's escape; and it was proved that he had been constantly in the habit of walking up and down the Ouden Zac, the Rozendael, and several other neighbouring streets, for some weeks before, with eyes fixed on the various parts of the convent, as if watching for some one inside, or calculating the means of their evasion.

To these statements, Renault Claassen, on his examination before the governor and the burgomaster, gave a ready assent; but he utterly denied the inference drawn by them, that he

was the violater of the sanctuary, and the novice's paramour. Disappointed as they had hitherto been, they were, however, too happy of a plausible pretext for obtaining such a victim as the son of a recusant so obnoxious to the enmity of the Spanish faction, of which the then burgomaster formed a part. It was in vain that Renault protested his innocence, declared that he had never even seen Beatrice, and confessed that the object of his observation and anxiety was no other than Theresa Van Rozenhoed, whom he had from time to time remarked with her father in the streets, and listened to as she sang and practised her cithern in the convent, for whom he had conceived a passion, but a passion without hope, in consequence of the hostile feelings reciprocally held by their parents, their difference of religion, and other insurmountable obstacles.

This defence soon spread abroad, but it created little effect in any but those of his own party, except in the breast of Theresa. Enough

has been told of her character, to explain the many-springing sensations it must have excited. Her love of justice, her hatred of tyranny, her abhorrence of Trovaldo, and as strong as all, perhaps, her sensibility to admiration, were enlisted in favour of the innocent man. She did not hesitate a moment as to what she should do; but sending for her father, and her confessor the Prior, she told them both, in presence of the Abbess, every circumstance that she was informed of concerning the flight of Beatrice. The hour at which it took place was indubitable evidence of Renault Claassen's innocence, for those who proved *against* him (as his ready judges choose to term their neutral evidence) averred that they saw him at midnight walking under the convent-walls. Theresa declared her intention of being on no account withheld from appearing before the members of the secret inquest by whom he was tried. The Abbess felt somewhat scandalized at this decision; the Prior discountenanced it; but Siger Van Rozenhoed,

like an honest man and a fair enemy, gave it his full approval. In consequence of this, Theresa appeared before the little tribunal, assembled in the governor's apartment; Renault Claassen having previously received intimation of the good fortune that awaited him. Theresa was accompanied by her father, with the Abbess and the Prior, neither of whom could refuse their attendance at Van Rozenhoed's request; and Theresa's steady and consistent evidence, in spite of her abashed and diffident demeanour, and the secret wishes of the governor, bishop, and burgomaster, fairly acquitted the culprit.

The effects of these proceedings were manifold: Claas Claassen, who loved his son, could not resist the temporary feeling of gratitude which prompted him to aid in the election of his old rival; Renault was, beyond all hope of cure, enamoured of his fair deliverer; and Theresa herself, who was greatly struck with the evident feelings he displayed, was, as one of the results of the affair, pronounced liable to

prosecution, as an abettor of the guilt of Beatrice and her seducer.

This part of the business was, however, merely thrown out as a threat by Trovaldo, and as quickly abandoned, on condition that he should be allowed to enter the lists as a suitor to Theresa, little doubting that his influence would soon carry the point, against the numerous rivals which her wealth and beauty were sure to generate.

Van Rozenhoed hesitated for awhile at this proposal. His hatred of the Spaniards, and his personal antipathy to the governor, urged him to give a direct refusal. But apprehension of his power, and a dread of compromising his daughter's reputation, decided him to follow the Prior's advice, and accept the proffered terms; particularly as the oracular voice of the monk assured him he possessed an infallible method of baffling Trovaldo's views. Almost simultaneously with this assurance, he proposed his nephew to be Siger's apprentice; but without

the most distant hint as to that being the means he alluded to.

Van Rozenhoed felt himself personally wounded by the outrage committed against the sacred house of which he had been the founder; and he would have gone any reasonable lengths to bring the guilty persons to punishment. He acquitted his daughter of any blame in the transaction, but he saw her danger, and he determined to bring her home, as soon as it was possible to make suitable arrangements for her fitting reception at Rozenhoed House. The bustle of the approaching election retarded this awhile, but at length it was over—he was chosen burgomaster; and then it was that he began to feel those qualms upon the subject, avowed to the Prior in their garden conversation, and soon dissipated, as the reader will recollect, by the skilful hint which the Prior threw out as to the possibility of Prince Maurice himself, the stadtholder, generalissimo and high admiral

of the United Provinces, shortly making his appearance in Bruges.

It was under these circumstances that Theresa entered into her home at Rozenhoed House, and took more peculiar possession of the northern turret, allotted especially to her use.

CHAPTER V.

ON the night on which Theresa's father affectionately installed her as the mistress of her new home, a scene of a different nature was acting in the private apartments of Don Juan de Trovaldo, in the government mansion, the garden of which was separated by the little canal from that of Rozenhoed House.

Trovaldo, whose dark mind had been in a state of constant ferment since the discovery of Beatrice's flight, now hurriedly paced the cabinet, which opened from his sleeping chamber,

while the Venetian mirror, hanging against the wall, shewed him his gaunt figure as he strided past, and the fierce play of his features, which were moved with no common excitement. The lamp of richly worked bronze, suspended from the ceiling, threw its light broadly on the room ; and the shadow of the governor moved along the walls, the floor, and through the open casement on the garden below. He occasionally stopped before the mirror, and gazed at the reflection of his countenance, lowering in dark delight, as a magician might contemplate the imp he had conjured up, embodying the likeness of his evil thoughts.

“ At length she shall be mine, in spite of fate itself !” cried Trovaldo, rubbing his hands together, and alternately passing one of them across his forehead, or stroking his beard towards a point. “ I have found her hiding-place—discovered her paramour—broken through the mystery of her cunning and her guilt. She shall be mine for vengeance, if not for

enjoyment, and he who has dared to come between me and mine own, to brave my power and baulk my will, his fate is sealed.”

With these words, the governor rang a silver hand bell which stood on the high mantelpiece, and the soft tone of which proved it to be meant for some closer attendant than the mere varlets of his household, who occupied a distant hall in the mansion. Almost as soon as he could replace the bell, an opening was made in the tapestry which covered the walls, and a man came forward through a small door, cunningly concealed from common observation. It was Gaspar, the Moriscoe, who appeared at the governor's summons. He stopped close to the secret door, which of itself closed behind him, leaving no appearance of an outlet in that part of the room. He was dressed in the usual costume of a Spanish serving man, without any visible badge of slavery, except an air of degradation in his mien and countenance, while he stood before his haughty master. His pale olive complexion

looked mean in comparison with the bronzed face that confronted him, particularly from the want of beard and whiskers, which so profusely covered *it*; and while Trovaldo's frizzled hair curled thickly on his shoulders, according to the fashion of the time, Gaspar's black locks hung sleekly down his back. His stature was of the middle size, but it looked diminutive beside his master's commanding height; and the large and swarthy features of the latter were markedly opposed to the thin-edged outlines which were presented by Gaspar's profile. Yet his aquiline nose, curved nostrils, and well-cut mouth, spoke a firmness and decision more than common; his eye looked piercingly bright in its dark tranquillity; and his high clear forehead bespoke a mind, far keener and stronger than that of the personification of power and passion who stood before him, and whom he held in awe.

Gaspar the Moriscoe feared but one man on earth—his master. He knew many of the

causes he had to hate him ; his father's death, his mother's dishonour, his own degradation ; he *did* hate him, yet he had often, when a mere boy, fought by his side, and more than once saved his life. He had had that life in his power hundreds of times, when a dagger, while Trovaldo slept, or poison as he drank, might at once have revenged his own, and his family's wrongs : but he never had thought of such a means. A mechanical dread had grown up with him from infancy ; an artificial instinct of servility, if it may be so called, was interwoven with his nature ; and even when he knew his superiority and felt it, when he despised his tyrant as thoroughly as he abhorred him, he still obeyed, and trembled ; for he sunk under the power that palsies alike the force of individuals and nations—the spell of slavery was round him.

“ Come boldly in, man ; here, close to me,” said the governor, as Gaspar silently stood at his usual respectful distance, waiting the com-

mands of his master, who had flung himself into a high-backed chair of carved oak, corresponding in material and workmanship to the other articles of furniture.

“Come forward, I say, Gaspar,” continued he: “walk like a free man, bold and firm; thy hour of liberty is nigh.”

A slight start, and a passing contraction of the brows and lips, the latter movement somewhat resembling a smile, were the tokens that the Moriscoe heard, and understood his master.

“What, Gaspar, has that word no meaning for thee? Dost thou not snuff the gale of freedom, blowing fully towards thee?”

“Don Juan, I am not yet free,” replied the Moriscoe; “I know your state, and my own station.”

“Tut, tut, man, thou art too nice. Thou mayst surely move when thy good fortune moves, and meet it half way.”

“Alas! 'tis a deception, Senor! The pro-

mised blessing flies from me, as I pursue; all hope of success is vain."

"I tell thee, Gaspar; once and for all, the charter of manumission is nearer than thou thinkest."

"How far?" asked the slave, with a despairing and sarcastic smile.

"The length of thy dagger's blade."

"Hah!" exclaimed Gaspar, seizing the dagger, and advancing three or four paces, while his eye seemed to measure the governor's body as the fitting sheath for his weapon.

"Right, Gaspar, right," cried Trovaldo, with a look so confident, as instantly to check the impulse that prompted the Moriscoe's thoughts. The upraised hand fell down, and the dagger seemed mechanically to slip into its usual place, as the governor continued,

"This is the spirit I wish to revive—that is the look and attitude I love to see thee wear. Art thou ready to avenge thy sister, to walk abroad in freedom?"

“ Point out the way—name my victim—Beatrice shall be revenged, and my soul and body free.”

“ Spoken like the man thou hast been, and worthy of what thou wilt prove thyself anon. That is the slight but sinewy arm, that struck down the Dutchman at Gertruydenburg, when his arquebuss was pointed at my head. Thy present bearing, Gaspar, reminds me of thee in that bloody day. Thou art now again in arms, for the best united causes that can nerve a man—honour and freedom !”

“ Don Juan, your excitements torture me ; let me act ! who is my sister’s seducer ? where, where is she ? and *he* ?” This last word was uttered with fierce emphasis, and his eyes seemed urged beyond their sockets by the force of his emotion.

“ Come closer then—every word I utter lessens the distance between us—one blow will make us equal.”

The looks of the Moriscoe once more

changed to a sullen desperation, and his hand grasped his weapon's hilt. But this was a momentary act, and he did not advance his foot.

“Who am I to strike?” asked he gloomily. “Listen,” replied Trovaldo, placing his broad hand on his chest. “If thou hadst but to raise thy arm and strike, this breast had been thy mark. Nay, Gaspar, look not so fearfully resolved; the time is not yet come. Thou hast much to dare, and to overcome, before the deed can be done. Thy foe is no common one.”

“Nor my *cause*, Senor! I am able to contend with any thing: it is futile to work me up to a higher pitch. Who, and what is this man?”

“Hast thou not heard of De Bassenvelt, chief of the black Walloons?”

“Who, Count Ivon? I have, Senor.”

“Dost thou shrink, Gaspar, from that name?”

“The question dishonours my whole race. But what do I say? How durst I talk of honour—am I not a slave?”

“The point of thy blade in Count Ivon’s heart, will start a stream to wash out all stains, good Gaspar. Beatrice lies this night within his arms.”

“Hell and furies!” cried the Moriscoe, fiercely stamping, pressing his clenched fists against his forehead, and gnashing his teeth.

“Aye, let it move thee as it ought—let it stir up every drop of Andalusian blood—let it rankle in thy heart!”

“It does, it does, Senor, I am ready for my work. Where is De Bassenvelt? let me rush against his throat!”

Trovaldo rose from his seat, and replied, “Not so, not so: softly, good Gaspar. Thou rememberest, when thou wert a child we saw together in Africa a lion steal upon a negro. He sprang on his prey, when sure of being within his reach. But he wound on

and followed him ere then, through brake and bush; moved when he moved, stopped when he stopped, crouched, rose up, crept close—his eye fixed, his jaws apart, with trembling limbs and panting chest; but when *sure* of him, Gaspar, he bounded on the wretch, struck him down and plunged his tusks—” Ere the sentence was thus broken, the half maddened Moriscoe, who had, step by step, enacted his master’s words, as the latter paced the room, leapt forward, as if in the very act of the fierce animal’s bound, so theatrically described by the governor.

“ Halloa ! hold, fellow ! ” exclaimed Trovaldo, standing up erect, and seizing his slave at full arm’s length, at the moment in which he was actively darting upon him.

“ What does this mean, Gaspar ? Why thou art phrenzy-struck on the head of thy revenge ! ”

“ Forgive, forgive me, honoured master, I am indeed frantic ; you have made me less rational than man, aye, than the very brute you

spoke of," said the slave, affrighted at his self-forgetfulness, and falling at Trovaldo's feet.

"Rise, Gaspar; that posture becomes thee not. Up, up! 'Tis not for him who has freedom in his reach, to crouch before man," said the governor.

"Except like the lion, about to spring upon his prey," exclaimed Gaspar, quickly starting up; and adding with a ghastly smile, "Thus I will bound upon De Bassenvelt!" he darted towards the wall, and struck his dagger through the tapestry which covered it.

"Traitor!" cried he, without seeking reason for the application of this readiest epithet of reproach.

"Traitor, indeed!" said the governor, hoarsely laughing at this action of his furious bondsman; "thou hast pierced Judas, and torn the master-piece of Jans's loom."

And, in fact, Gaspar had in his abstraction inflicted a serious wound on the body of the traitor disciple, in a beautiful copy of Leonardo

da Vinci's "Last Supper," worked by the celebrated founder of the Gobelins, who had lately left Bruges, his native town, to settle in Paris, at the pressing invitation of Henry IV. The clumsy stitching up of the rent in the faded tapestry, is evident at the present time.

Trovaldo's laugh brought the Moriscoe to a sense of the ludicrous part into which his violence had hurried him; and as if abashed, or for the purpose of calming his fermented thoughts, he placed his open hands across his eyes, and stood motionless for a while.

"Rouse up, Gaspar, rouse thee, and hearken to the means of tracking thy sister's paramour," said the governor; and as Gaspar listened, with an attention as intense, but not so violent as before, he gave him minute instructions for his journey to the Castle of Welbasch on the banks of the Meuse, in the Walloon country, and on the skirts of Eastern Brabant.

"There, in his fancied safety, lies the libertine with his associate band, not less profligate

than he is. Darest thou penetrate into that strong hold? Wilt thou there do the deed—there strike him to the heart, encircled by his lawless troop, even in thy polluted sister's arms?"

"Aye, both with one blow," uttered Gaspar, in a gloomy steadiness of tone, widely contrasted with his late vehemence.

"What dost thou say, Gaspar? not *both*, not thy own flesh and blood! Beware, man, lest thou goest too far. Remember, thou killest De Bassenvelt for me: Beatrice is the child, the property, the right of our holy church,"

"Kill him for *you*, Don Juan! I find that even now, you know me not. I am your slave, 'tis true, but not your sword blade. I kill, Senor, but for myself—for my own wrong, or in my line of duty—but I am no man's bravo, not even your's, my master; and as for Beatrice, she must die: not to revenge the church, but to retrieve her fame. Death must stand in the stead of honour; and whose but her brother's hand shall consummate the sacrifice?"

“Gaspar, this cannot be; Beatrice must be reserved, an offering to the religion she has outraged. Pledge thyself to do her no harm, or thou quittest me not. Some other hand shall snatch the glorious vengeance that should have been thine; and I swear by the host of saints, thou shalt rest a slave for ever.”

“That’s a long term of bondage, Don Juan,” calmly answered Gaspar, with a smile so bitterly contemptuous, as to be reconciled with his late servility, only by our experience of the degrading vacillation of human nature. He added in a similar tone, and a gesture that gave force to his words, “The dagger that may kill a freeman, can set a bondsman free.”

“Come, come, good Gaspar—no more of this,” said the governor, with haughty condescension. “I know thou art brave to recklessness; but life is worth its value, is it not?”

“And is not death, Senor, honourable death? But when that pays the price of freedom, what can estimate its value? The wealth of a thousand worlds, the purchase of a thou-

sand lives, fall short of the good it buys, and necessarily reach not its intrinsic worth."

"Thou art a subtle reasoner, Gaspar, and I leave to thee this estimate. I know not the abstract worth of liberty."

"Because you never knew its loss."

"Well, well, so be it! This is no time for mooted points like that—thy sister!"

"Ha! true, I know what you would add. Beatrice is free, but her's is the liberty of guilt, *mine* shall be gained with honour—let me away then—I am ready."

"Well then we are agreed: one culprit sacrificed to thy just revenge, the other is left to the church. Thou swearest not to harm thy sister?"

"I swear it, Senor: I will spare her life."

"Now then to horse, good Gaspar! Take the brown Flemish gelding, that I seized from the disbanded captain of the lancers of St. Mark: thy own Andalusian steed might suggest uneasy questions. Thou art a soldier

of the lancers, mark me, discontented with the dulness of this garrison, and longing to exchange its sluggard duties for active service under De Bassenvelt. Procure a uniform suit. Arm thyself well ; ride on—here is thy pass, all ready—Antonio Laredo is thy name. Go freely on, thou hast no hindrance to encounter. At the outermost guard of Brussels, a fresh horse will be furnished in virtue of this pass. On the left bank of the Meuse, right opposite to the Castle of Welbasch, where thou canst well arrive by sunset to morrow, an alder grove stretches across the marsh from the river's bank ; wait there until a boat is put forward by a man, just as twilight becomes extinct, and darkness is setting in. He will be dressed in a light blue doublet, trimmed with fur, and a cap of the same. His face may be concealed ; if so, make no remark, nor question him in aught. But hand him this ring, graven with the head of our late illustrious monarch, Philip. Follow his instruc-

tions, and they will lead thee to the easy consummation of thy task. Now then, farewell. There is my open casket, take money for thy wants, and away !”

“ They will be few for a man who may die within a day or two,” said Gaspar, taking some gold pieces.

“ What rustling is that ? Is the wind rising ?” asked Trovaldo, abruptly moving towards the half open casement ; and as he put forth his head, he continued, “ No, all is calm. Perhaps some passing breeze just shook the old chestnut tree ;” and as Gaspar looked forward, he observed the branches close to the window still vibrating, as though some sudden movement had shaken them.

“ How solemn the night looks,” said Trovaldo.

“ ’Tis dark and still,” replied the slave.

“ Fitting thy enterprise, my brave Gaspar.”

“ Daylight or gloom are all the same to me, Senor ; I am neither ashamed nor afraid.”

“How tranquil every thing looks! Heaven and earth seem to sleep. The water alone shews life, as the beam of my lamp dances through it. And see! look at Van Rozenhoed’s turret, Gaspar; it is lighted up; there are people moving there. By my poignard’s hilt” (and he raised the weapon, and pressed its cruciform handle to his lips,) “it is Theresa that walks to and fro, with her duenna. She has then left the convent and come home. By and by my thoughts must turn to her. Hark! ’tis music—some low-bred burghers welcoming their magistrate’s daughter.”

As Trovaldo leant from the stone balcony that hung beyond his window, and Gaspar stood beside him, the following stanza was sung, in the French language, in a full toned but delicate voice, being neatly accompanied on a Spanish guitar. It was from a well known romance of Dirk Coornhert—the Secretary to the States General of Holland, addressed by him to his imprisoned mistress, Melinsenda, Countess of

Velthen, and full of the fanciful conceits of the times—

Wake not, maiden ! stilly lie,
With lids sleep laden, humid eye,
 And lips apart ;
Emblems of a mind at rest,
 Feeling breast,
 And open heart.

“ By Heaven, though,” exclaimed Trovaldo, as the stanza was finished, “ that is no mean musician ! Young Claassen, and such as he, would have raised a coarser strain. Hist ! Gaspar, he begins anew.”

“ Pardon, Senor, I have no soul for music now. Its sounds distract me. I must away.”

“ Begone, then ; and Heaven prosper thy revenge !”

The Moriscoe bowed profoundly, and retired through the private entrance. Trovaldo turned again into the balcony ; and bending on the balustrade, listened as acutely to the song, thus continued, as though unconscious that he had just despatched an agent to commit a murder.

Thou art risen—as the lark,
In wiry prison, lone and dark,
That flaps its wing
With sad time-keeping 'gainst the cage ;
Is it in rage
That free birds sing ?

No, ladye ! rather like the dove,
Whose charm'd ears gather notes of love,
In its soft nest,
Thou hearkenest to the murmuring soft
Sent up aloft
From a true breast.

“ How sweetly, how feelingly this fellow sings !” exclaimed the governor. But he was not the only listener. One of the little casements of the opposite turret shewed a female form, leaning through it, from the moment that the prelude was struck on the instrument.

“ Where can this voice come from, and whose is it ?” asked Trovaldo to himself. “ What ! am I moved at this ? Already *jealous*, and of a sound ? For shame—for shame ! No, this fair girl must not distract me from the deep object next my heart, much less her vulgar serenaders. Ah ! there the fellow goes,

no doubt," and his eyes strained to observe the motion of a little boat, that softly glided down the canal, towards the Dominican cloister.

In a few minutes more, another serenade was begun, but of a kind less pleasing than the last. Instead of the simple melody of one sweet voice and the vibration of a single instrument slightly touched, the harmony of several, and the chorus of three or four singers, broke across the water from Rozenhoed Quay, where the performers were stationed.

"Aye," cried the governor, "there go the noisy throats of the coarse citizens. *That* suits the taste of the young tanner, perhaps, but not mine. Paltry fellows all, single or in herds! When *I* sound my amorous wooing to the fair, the *rich* Theresa, it shall be with a flourish of trumpets!"

With these words, he retired from the window, closed it loudly behind him, stamped on the floor for one of his personal attendants, and passed into his sleeping-room.

It would appear, that the crash of the band harmonised as little with the feeling of the turret's fair tenant; for the figure withdrew from the casement, and the light moved away into another room.

CHAPTER VI.

GASPAR was soon equipped in his assumed character, mounted on his horse, and close to the gate of the city, which led to the Ghent Road. But previous to its being opened to admit of his exit, the necessary forms of examining his pass and entering it in the night's report, were to be gone through by the officer of the guard. While these proceedings were going on, Gaspar perceived a man, who stood at the guard-house door, holding the bridle of a horse, and apparently waiting for the lower-

ing of the drawbridge, which was to admit of his also passing from the town. He wore a cloak with a high standing collar buttoned close above his chin; his face was amply concealed by a broad leafed brown beaver hat, such as the Spaniards call a sombrero. Gaspar, with his natural acuteness and suspicion, watched this figure closely; but he could only discover, or fancy he discovered, that the stranger contrived to keep his head turned, so as to have an eye fixed on *him*, as he went through the formalities above mentioned.

When all was finished the guard was ordered to turn out under arms; the sentinels on the walls above were warned to look sharply forward, to see that all was right beyond the ramparts; the ponderous gates then creaked back on their hinges; the draw-bridge came clanking down into its grooves; and the way was ready for the two travellers.

“Mount, cavaliers,” said the serjeant of the guard; “it is lucky that ye travel the same

road, for good company cheers a dark night; and if you fall in with the Picaroons, between the Senne and the Sambre, why one of you may have a chance to gallop back, to tell that the other is defunct."

Neither of the travellers seemed to relish this coarse attempt at pleasantry, for they maintained a complete silence, and they merely waved their hands, as they passed through the portcullis, in return to the audible civilities of the serjeant, the porter, and his assistants.

As soon as the noise of the chains hauling up the bridge, and of the bolts and bars fastening the gates, had subsided, and the outer defences of the place were cleared, the stranger seemed to throw off his reserve, but not his concealment.

He turned towards Gaspar and addressed him, his voice betokening a considerable degree of hoarseness, real or feigned.

"So it seems we journey the same road,

Senor ?” said he, in Spanish, in a doubtful tone of interrogatory or mere remark.

Gaspar, who did not feel inclined to enter into conversation, chose to take it in the latter sense, and made no reply.

“ I ask many pardons, Signior,” returned the stranger, in Italian, “ I thought you were a countryman of our noble governor there ; but I suppose you come from beyond the Alps ?”

This was a more palpable question than the last ; yet Gaspar, who knew its purport though he did not understand the language well, felt himself absolved from any obligation to notice it.

“ What, mistaken again !” exclaimed the horseman, and now speaking French, “ *ventre St. Gris !*” (an oath just before then made fashionable by the great Henry,) “ if Monsieur be not French, my stock of language is spent, unless, indeed, he can smatter the patois of the Walloon country. But if Holland or England

boasts the honour of his birth, I can do little in their tongues. I can say, *Mynheer* in the one, and *Master* in the other, and that goes but a short way in a night's march. Come, Senor," added he, spurring his horse close to Gaspar's, and once more addressing him in Spanish, "let's be sociable—we are going further together than you think, and our errands may not be wide of the same mark either. Let me whisper one word in your ear—Beatrice!"

As the man had pressed towards him, Gaspar instinctively grasped a petronel, a kind of huge pistol, that filled one of his holsters; but the last sentence made him pause with surprise, the concluding word caused him suddenly to start in his saddle, and as he pulled up his bridle the well trained steed stepped short. The stranger followed the movement, and reined in his horse: then, putting his head still closer to the Moriscoe, he added,

"Why should a word of friendship or a

name of kindred startle you, Senor?—your hand on our joint success, our purpose is the same.”

“How’s this? What mean you?” asked the wary Moriscoe, recovering his self-command.

“Mean? why to do what you are about to do,—to reach the Castle of Welbasch, soon and secretly—need I add the rest?”

“Don Juan said nought of such a one as you,” replied Gaspar, still doubtingly, but excited to a partial indiscretion, by the stranger’s last allusion.

“Yes, but he did though. Might I not be known on horseback, as well as in a boat? Is not a brown cloak as good a token as a furred doublet? If my zeal brought me to meet you on land, am I less genuine than if I had found you on water?”

“Why this concealment of your person?”

“Did not Don Juan prepare you for that? Why do *you* change your appearance, your name and apparel? I ask no reply to my

questions—let yours rest unanswered: we shall know each other when our poignards clash in De Bassenvelt's body! Your hand, Senor!"

"Take it," cried Gaspar, with nervous emotion; "I can have no further scruples. Pardon my hesitation—but mystery begets distrust—"

"And ensures success; so let us travel on together, darkly, but confidentially: we are as one man."

"Lead me to my revenge, and I am yours for ever!"

"We shall go together, Gaspar: no leading, no following; our object is the redress of Beatrice's wrongs, and the punishment of him who sought her ruin."

"Who completed it!" exclaimed Gaspar.

"As you like," said the stranger.

"Would that it might be as I like," muttered Gaspar.

"It *shall* be so!" replied the stranger, with

a deep emphasis that bespoke power as well as promise.

The companions journeyed on during the whole night. They stopped but once, to bait their horses, in a solitary part of the country between Bruges and Ghent, which is now a thickly inhabited and cultivated district, intersected by the great canal, which had then made some advances from either end, but was, as yet, unfinished.

Being both well mounted, they had made considerable progress along the causeway they had so far travelled, and their horses shewed but little fatigue as they ravenously attacked the mixed mess of oats, beans, and brown bread, prepared for them under the inspection of their riders. Gaspar saw that his companion was no stranger at the lone cottage where, by his recommendation, they had halted. The man who owned it seemed to expect him. It was not yet daylight when they arrived; yet he was up, and ready for

the reception of at least one guest. A rude repast was spread on the kitchen table, and the fire-balls, composed of moistened slack and clay hardened in the sun, were blazing hotly, if not cheerfully, on the hearth.

Still, no words were interchanged that avowed any acquaintanceship; and after both men and beasts had had a hearty meal and an hour's repose, they were once more on the road.

During the remaining time of their continuance in company, as well as previously to the stoppage just mentioned, Gaspar and his companion had held much converse together, with occasional pauses, as each sunk into the depths of unuttered thought. The Moriscoe more frequently than the other, lapsed into silence. The dark purpose within him seemed to draw every faculty into its vortex. If the stranger had an equal weight on his mind, it sat more lightly there. His fits of silence were short, his conversation fluent,

his questions acute, and his allusion to De Bassenvelt, of whom he had avowed himself the intended assassin, bore none of the virulence which might be thought to form a component part of his design and its impulse. Gaspar, at times, felt uncertain as to his companion, and doubted his fitness for the task ; but he was re-assured again by the air of careless decision which marked the stranger's words and manner. He had, in fact, begun already to feel the superiority of this man, without its being at all obtruded on him. He seemed carried away in the current of his inquiries and remarks. He answered his minutest question as to the habits and feelings of Don Juan de Trovaldo, and as to the temper and state of the garrison of Bruges, with a facility and a sort of obedience that seemed due only to the commands of a master ; and if Gaspar was by chance occasionally close or hesitating in his replies, some skilful turn of subject, or hint of their joint object, or a sentence in open

praise of Beatrice, (of whom the stranger spoke all through with a tone of deep sincerity,) was sure to bring him to his purpose, which he thus attained, as a river reaches the sea, by continuous windings round every obstruction, steadily pursuing, while apparently changing its course.

Daylight brought with it no abatement in the stranger's caution: it added to it the rather; and Gaspar found it impossible to obtain a sight of his face, or even his person, so closely were they concealed by his large horseman's cloak and slouched hat. He did not know, in fact, whether he was travelling with an old man or a young one, a fat one or a lean, and not positively whether he was tall or short; but on the latter point he could venture to decide, to his own satisfaction, that the stranger was not remarkably the one or the other. While he sat in his saddle, and when he dismounted from his horse, he appeared to be of that happy middle height which enables

men to go through life on a level with their fellows—a particular advantage for those who shuffle through it in disguise and mystery, as seemed clearly the case with the subject of our and Gaspar's remarks.

They had ridden twelve hours, including a second stoppage for the refreshment of their horses; and they had passed within view of the tall spires of Brussels, which lay low to the left, the city not having at that time crept quite to the summit of the hill, which is now covered by its most beautiful streets and squares, but which was then occupied by a large extent of park, where game was shot, and deer were hunted by the Archduke and the courtiers, as engravings of the period still attest.

The travellers arrived at Grand Bygard, the station appointed by Don Juan for Gaspar's change of horse. This had now become a necessary measure; for the one he rode, though a gallant one, was beginning to flag after his

long journey. The stranger and his steed, which was of a lighter and finer breed than Gaspar's, shewed no symptoms of fatigue. Both seemed as fresh for the road, after a slight repast suited to their separate tastes, as if they had not travelled a league, yet they had gone full twenty ; and they seemed as if ready to double the distance, when they re-appeared at the skirts of the forest Soignies, (or the *So-nien Bosch*,* as it is still called in the native language) where the stranger had given Gaspar rendezvous. For he did not approach the military post, at which the latter had presented himself in virtue of Don Juan's pass ; but took a road that led into the forest, saying that he knew where to provide himself and his good beast, with all that they required.

The Senne was now fairly passed, and the way lay straight before them to the Sambre, which Gaspar's directions told him to cross, a couple of

* Forest of the Sun : the probable remains of some old idolatry.

leagues above its confluence with the Meuse, under the ramparts of Namur. He would then fall into a road leading in almost a direct line across the hilly country, beyond which the last mentioned river winds along in imbedded beauty, between wooded acclivities that slope up gradually from teeming meadows, or naked rocks that shoot perpendicularly from the water's edge, and throw their shadows far across the stream.

“ Well, Gaspar, we approach the term of our journey,” said the stranger familiarly, as they emerged from a narrow path, which led through the intricacies of the forest.

“ Your new steed, though not worth the last, is a good one, and it may stand you in need. Fresh horse fresh courage, as the old proverb of Hembyse says—you know the Picaroons are abroad; by and by we shall be in their peculiar district.”

“ I am prepared to meet risks; the whole

of this Walloon country is infested with them, is it not?"

"Not all. The banks of the Meuse are free, thanks to De Bassenvelt and his black chasseurs."

"*Thanks* to him, Senor! I should not have expected that courtesy from your lips."

"Come, come, let's give even the devil his due, Gaspar. He has done good service, in scouring the country and driving these ruffian hordes before him."

"I know nought of him but his name and his *crime*, for which my hand—"

"Well, well, let him die for justice sake if he be guilty, but—"

"*If* he be guilty!" exclaimed Gaspar, interrupting, in his turn, the stranger's expression.

"Yes, *if*, Gaspar. Let us examine things scrupulously; what proof have you of his guilt?"

"My *master's* word," answered the Moriscoe, bitterly.

“ Good proof, no doubt,” said the stranger, with something (at least Gaspar thought so) of a sneer, conveyed even in the expression of his feigned voice, “ good proof; but what is his authority?”

“ That I know not; nor is it my wont to question, or examine into, his assertions. I should have thought that *you* were more in his confidence on this point; and haply it is you that may best answer your own demand.”

“ Spoken like a trust-worthy friend, rather than an un-emancipated servitor,” briskly exclaimed the stranger. “ This was but to try you, comrade, and in somewise, perhaps, to probe Don Juan’s depth. I see he has not gone too far. All’s well, then—you have your task to perform—do it, but do it discreetly. Let not your feelings hurry you away; strike no blow till I strike with you. It must not only be struck *home*, but we must be held as harmless.”

“ I have no fear of results,” said Gaspar, sullenly.

“ But others must be considered as well as self,” added the stranger. “ Beatrice’s safety and Trovaldo’s character must neither be compromised. Were you disavowed as the doer, the deed would be visited on them. Besides, I too am entitled to a share in the act ; you know not yet how closely I am concerned in this.”

“ That is your own affair, Senor ; I ask but one blow—the first ! follow it up as you please. I will act under your guidance till my naked knife is in my upraised hand—then I am free !”

“ So far so well,” said the stranger ; “ now, Gaspar, we understand each other quite.”

“ You know me thoroughly, Senor, but—”

“ No *but*s, good Gaspar : you cavilled at my *ifs* ; wait patiently awhile, I will unfold myself in proper season,” remarked the stranger, in his usual abrupt way of cutting short the Moriscoe’s sentences ; but he added, in a more serious one : “ And now then, hold well to your saddle,

and keep your horse in hand : let your spurs feel his flanks, and have eyes and ears for all around. We are step by step entering into the outlaws' own domain. In these intricate passes of ravine, and wood, and wild, not even may Bassenvelt's chasseurs cope with them."

"And should we fall in with these brigands, what course may be best pursued, Senor?"

"That to which your horse's head may at the time be pointed. At the first sight or sound of the freebooters, fly, friend Gaspar! Firm fixed knees, heels well set, tight hand and cool head, is then the order of the minute. Forward, away! is the word. But a turn of your beast's head, aye, or of your own, comrade, will be waste of time, that may bring loss of life. Let no picaroon reach as far as your crupper, or by the mass you are a dead man, Gaspar!"

"You know these robbers well it would seem, Senor?"

"Aye, and they know me; for which reason, if we fall in with them, neither you nor I

must stand on ceremony. Each for each! must be then the cry, and so we may chance to separate."

"And what then, Senor?" asked Gaspar.

"Why, then, if their rapiers cannot reach or their petronels overtake us, we dash on as we may, pass the Sambre as we can, and make the Meuse at our leisure. You know your rendezvous, the Alder Grove opposite the Castle of Welbasch? If the boat does not come by twilight to the spot, you may judge that some ill has befallen your pilot. Then shift for yourself, and forget me."

"We must hope the best, Senor; I have no fear of the brigands for myself, and less for you: your horse seems one that nought can tire, and few can come up with."

"My horse! Yes, he is a good one—a true Arab—pure blood—high mettle—fleet foot; a beast beyond price." And as the stranger said this, he patted affectionately the neck of the animal, which acknowledged the kindness by a

whinnying reply, and a snort, as he tossed his head up and down.

“Hush! hush!” said the rider, roughly slapping his hand against the neck he had before so gently stroked; “this is no time for talk, Rolando: that voice of your’s in a picaroon’s ear, would sound like a warning-trumpet.”

“It would take no small count of florins, Senor, to buy your favourite from you,” said Gaspar.

“Three thousand have been offered, but failed to tempt me, Gaspar. But take one word more of caution from me. Should we part sooner than we think of, and that fate lets us meet again at our appointed station, nothing may pass between us to denote we had met before. Step into the boat, and speak if I speak, but not even in a whisper, in allusion to this journey. The very stream has ears for De Bassenvelt. All within sight of his castle seems to have hearing for his service. Don Juan

warned you, did he not, that your guide might use concealment?"

"He did; I am prepared for that."

"Then let nought surprise you in this perilous enterprise. Keep a firm heart, and a cool head—once more I say it. And for both our sakes—for the sake of her who is dear and precious to us both—for the sake of justice, and the ensurance of a right revenge, swear to me by the holiest oath, that thou will not, under any circumstance, strike Bassenvelt's death-blow, till *I say strike!*"

To this demand, which gained peculiar solemnity, from the deeply concealed voice that spoke it, Gaspar as solemnly replied, but in a tone of elevated firmness—

"I swear by the faith of my father, by the revenge I have vowed, by my love for my degraded sister, and my hatred for her undoer, to act as you desire! I can make no stronger pledge."

"'Tis more than enough. Once then again,

thy hand—I know thee well, far better than thou canst believe; and on no slight grounds I swear to thee, friendship, freedom, and happiness! But, hark! Dost thou hear nothing?”

The sound of a not distant horn was clearly repeated. The stranger fixed himself in his seat, caught up his reins in his bridle hand, waved the other towards Gaspar, and exclaimed,

“By Heaven, ’tis the picaroons’ horn! They are out and in force, or that blast would not affront the land. Keep my counsel and your own courage, Gaspar. I cannot dally, nor risk a life on which the fate and fame of others is hanging. Farewell! We must part here—you cannot follow me; but singly we may both escape. Away, on your course!”

With these words, the stranger turned his horse suddenly in the narrow road they travelled, the right hand side of which was bounded by steep hills, and the left by a wall of loose and rudely cut stones, that formed an

enclosure without any opening as far as was to be seen, in either the direction they came, or that before them. At this wall, the stranger, without hesitation, ran his horse; and in a moment the beautiful and highly-trained animal sprang across, striking fire and dust from its topmost edge with his hind feet, which thus gave a new impetus to the bound that carried him beyond.

Gaspar rose in his stirrups, gazing in astonishment at the leap, which was of a height totally impracticable for the heavy war horse he rode. He strained to gain a view of the stranger across the wall, but in vain; and two or three seconds elapsed ere he heard the horse land at the other side, while a voice, which seemed scarcely that he had so lately spoken with, halloed out—

“ Safe and sound, thanks to my saint, and to thee, Rolando ! Away, Gaspar, away ! ”

The sounds of fleet galloping confirmed this hurried announcement, and brought quickly to

the Moriscoe's mind the sense of his own danger. With the natural steadiness of a reflective temperament, he paused; and calling up all the energy of caution with that of courage, a rush of recollection as to what had lately passed, and of cogitation as to what was to be now done, flashed in a moment upon him; a crowd of notions swept past him, leaving no palpable conviction behind. Could he have been betrayed? Who was this stranger? Some impostor—some creature of De Bassenvelt, duping Don Juan, and bent on removing *him*, and frustrating his revenge? One of the very picaroons he seemed to shun, entrapping him into the toils? What now to do? Retreat! abandon his enterprise! Disgrace, worse than death, lay that way; and the horns sounded now in that direction! Away then in front! Straight onward, through thick and thin!

Quick as the thought was formed, a petronel was pulled from its holster, and cocked in the right hand of the intrepid Moriscoe; his bridle,

tightly held, employed the other; and in a moment the brave steed was on his utmost stretch, the narrow pass in which he tore along ploughed up and echoing to his iron tread.

As he pressed forward, the sound of the horns ceased, at least he heard them not; and he dashed on, for a time, without any hindrance or any evidence of danger. In a few minutes, however, the road suddenly opened out to the right and left. On the one side was a deep precipice, on the other a thick and apparently impenetrable wood. The extensive space between was covered with high grass at either side of the narrow road, which was again closely embraced by overhanging trees, at about one hundred yards opposite to the opening from which Gaspar now emerged. But no sooner did he find himself on the verge of this space than he reined in his horse so suddenly, that the animal, thrown back on his haunches, stood erect, plunged forward again, and gave ample work to all the rider's address.

in horsemanship to manage him. The cause of this sudden check was the pang of terrified surprise, with which Gaspar saw the whole of the space before him covered with appalling proofs that he had rushed into the midst of the danger which he thought he fled from. Full twenty armed men, with their horses, seemed to occupy the place. Gaspar's hurried glance might have exaggerated the number; and the loose manner in which they had scattered themselves over it, added perhaps to the illusion. But enough was there to make the bravest blood run chill.

Men and steeds were standing or lying at their pleasure, the latter grazing freely in the rich pasture; some of the motley band were snatching a repast of such provision as their haversacks afforded; others slept in the shade of the trees, or lounged on the low wall that edged the precipice to the left, and seemed to contemplate the country below, which they were perhaps about to ravage. All bore witness of

a halt, indulged without order or discipline, in contempt of precaution, or in confidence of security. Gaspar saw he was in the midst of the picaroons.

The moment that sufficed for these remarks was sufficient to fill the brigands with *their* portion of astonishment, conjecture, and alarm. Gaspar bore the uniform of a Spanish dragoon. No doubt could be entertained of his being aught but the advanced vidette of a detachment, sent out from the garrison of Brussels in their pursuit. This electric thought ran through the different groups. In a moment every man was on his feet, or springing into his saddle. Safety and flight were the only ideas for which each had room; and this desperate troop of marauders was seized with a panic that the merest dastards might have shewn. Some plunged on foot into the forests; others cleared the wall, and scrambled down the precipice; a few, who quickly mounted, galloped off on the very road which Gaspar meant to pursue.

His heart rose at the aspect of this confusion ; but it sank as quickly, when he heard the blasts of the horn gaining on his rear ; and he felt all the peril of his situation, as he saw not far behind him an advance of the same ruffian freebooters as those whom his presence had dispersed. Despair has no ear for reflection. Like a wild beast bounding from his lair into the very toils of the hunters, did the Moriscoe now dart forward. The restive horse sprang out at the fierce pressure of the spurs ; and with head towards the earth, and long tail lashing his goaded sides, he plunged on with a speed the rider could no more controul.

Thus flying and pursuing, in terror and in triumph, Gaspar was borne forward, and soon passed by several of the robbers, who seemed paralyzed by fear. One only, the foremost of the fugitives, but the last of Gaspar's obstructions, either ashamed at having fled from a single foe, or resolved in despair to sell his life dearly, turned his horse's head, and drawing

his long sword, seemed resolved to block up the passage. The Moriscoe's finger pressed on the trigger of his petronel, and ere the sound could reach the robber's ear, he fell wounded to the earth.

The way seemed now clear, and Gaspar began to breathe more freely; but the loud blasts of the horns behind him, the clatter of horses feet, the shouts of the enraged stragglers, who discovered that they had fled from a single fugitive, kept his alarm at its height, and he still urged the almost exhausted horse to the top of his speed. He felt that his safety now depended upon that. But his feelings deceived him, for the chance of escape was past. He suddenly saw before him a large body of fresh assailants, who, warned by the signal sounds of the horn and by the clattering of coming hoofs, stood across the road, prepared for the approach of friend or foe. Gaspar now found he had nothing for it but to dash on. In a moment two or three carabines were discharged,

unerringly at their mark, and the brave courser that had bore him so far and so well, fell dead under him; and he rolled with the quivering carcase to and fro in the dust, till extricated by the robbers, who now rushed round him from all sides.

While some of them seized him, and dragged him up upon his feet, his eye was fixed on one, who by the air of resolute command, rather than any richness of apparel, seemed evidently the chief.

This man, having dismounted from his horse, stood calmly by, without speaking a word, while the Moriscoe was placed before him. One of the robbers fancying that he read in this stern silence a not unwonted signal for the prisoner's death, drew his dagger, and was in the act of striking Gaspar to the heart, when the chieftain suddenly raised the long sword on which he leant, and with a powerful blow almost severed the man's arm from his body. As the intended murderer reeled from the

shock, and let his weapon fall from his hand, the chief motioned to have him removed. A slight murmur ran through the band ; but a stern look from him, while he placed his hand on one of the several pistols that filled his leathern girdle, instantly hushed the sound ; and at this moment three or four of the robbers came up, bearing the fellow whom Gaspar had wounded.

As soon as the captain saw this bleeding victim, he shewed some slight and passing emotion, and he briefly demanded an explanation of the circumstances that had excited so much alarm and brought Gaspar into his presence. The wounded man it appeared had had the command of the advanced party which Gaspar had surprised. He faintly answered the stern questions of the captain, who seemed intuitively to read the whole affair. As the explanation went on, a lowering frown settled on his brow, and little by little, he drew the pistol from his belt and cocked it.

“ Then, Jacob Wooperman, the case is this : First, you were surprised ?” slowly asked the captain.

“ I confess it,” said the wounded man, as slowly.

“ And then you fled ?”

“ I retreated on the main body.”

“ You *fled*—fled before a single man !”

“ Be it as you like !” was the sullen answer to this fiercely uttered sentence, which sounded more like judgment than accusation.

“ You all hear this ?” said the captain, turning round to the assembled banditti.

“ Yes, we do ; we hear it ; it is true ;” and the like admissions were gloomily pronounced.

“ Good !” exclaimed the captain ; and then staring darkly on the wounded man, whose pale face and quivering lips shewed a stronger emotion than that of mere bodily pain, he added,

“ To you I entrusted the command of our

advance; our whole safety was in your care; you neglected it; our ruin might have followed; you fled, in panic and infamy; you are not worthy of life; it is doubly forfeited by the rules of our band.”

He waved his hand to those who supported the culprit. They instantly obeyed the motion, and each quitted his hold. The trembling wretch staggered, and was falling to the ground, but ere his body sank on it, he was a corpse. A brace of bullets from the captain's pistol had been lodged in his breast; and this joint judge and executioner exclaimed,

“Away with him, throw the black mantle on his carcase, and never let the name of the coward be even whispered among the brave!”

A black cloak, profusely marked with blood in broad and clotted patches, (the evidence of former murders), was instantly thrown over the body, in obedience to this morose and merciless order. The dark countenances around were fixed in stern observance.

Gaspar was petrified with horror at the scene ; and he was only awoke to consciousness by the rough grasp of two of the robbers, who bound a cord tightly round his arms, and bore him along, in obedience to the signal of the ruthless man who had just saved his life ; but, as it seemed, to prolong it for some more tedious termination than what he had dealt to his hapless lieutenant.

CHAPTER VII.

THE cold-blooded desperado who committed the act just recorded, was the notorious (or, as his other deeds have entitled him to be called in history,) the celebrated Martin Schenck. He was forced up into this rank of celebrity by the heat of civil war, acting on a fierce and inflammable mind. He was one of those reckless bravos in whom boldness is mistaken for ambition, and brutality for valour. Animal courage he possessed to an odious excess, for it smothered the moral sense

that should make men value life, and engendered a ferocity that is not a natural attribute of man. Blood and rapine were the revelries of Martin Schenck ; and he slept at night as soundly, as if his hands had not reeked all day. His restless energy kept him constantly in action, but his acts were those of a bandit rather than a warrior ; yet he had served in the Spanish army, before the period at which we have introduced him, with great distinction. Rising from some obscure and unrecorded source, he had secured promotion and command. He surprised an important fortress ; and because the Spanish general refused him the government of a district, he turned from the side he had fought for, and became as ruthless a partisan in the cause of freedom, as he had been a ready instrument in the hands of tyranny.

In his personal character he was loathsome ; none of the graceful gallantry of chivalry softened down the fury of the mere soldier.

He fought from impulse, not for fame. He drank deeply, but from no social sentiment. Wine did not open his heart, nor relax his ferocity. He was never seen to smile. When most drunk, he was most reserved and collected; and, drunk or sober, he inflexibly did such savage deeds as those which we have pictured. Yet such was his influence over the fiercest men, that they submitted to him like children, and followed him like slaves.

Having quitted the Spanish service in gloomy hatred, he balanced for a while what step to take: but his rankling revenge threw him quickly into the occupation in which we now pourtray him. He joined one of the independent bands of outlaws, formed by deserters of all nations from the Royalist troops; and he was ferociously hailed as their chief, by spirits congenial, though inferior to his own.

Such was the man before whom Gaspar the Moriscoe was dragged, uncertain of the doom

that might await him, and lost in bewildering conjectures as to the fearful individual, who in so short a space had been his protector, was his judge, and might become his destroyer.

As the chief strode on before him, Gaspar close following, measured him with his eye. His height answered to the whisperings of suspicion which told him he gazed on no other than his late mysterious companion. He strove to recal the tones of the harsh voice which held converse with him so long; and comparing it with the unguarded accents that came up from beyond the wall after the horseman's desperate leap, he would have identified them with the gloomy sounds uttered by this man, in the hurried examination of the ill-fated wretch he had murdered.

But Gaspar could form no conclusion on the point. Ready as he was to steep his own hand in blood, to revenge an unproved wrong, yet he shrunk from the being who could remorselessly slay one associate and maim another, for

offences or intentions not personal to himself. And again, considering the whole mien and conduct of this man, he could not bring himself to do such injustice to the free and social bearing of the strange horseman as to believe them one and the same.

The whole band of picaroons being now assembled and joined by the party whose sounding horns had at first so alarmed the Moriscoe, they composed a very formidable body. They were altogether not less than two hundred men ; and such men as might defy and strike terror into others, double that number. Desperation was stamped on their mien ; and they looked the very spirit of the motto, worked on a red banner, which one of them carried.

“ TO DARE IS TO DO ! ”

Mingled with the air of ruffian villany which pervaded the whole, there was also one of service, which proved them to be soldiers, however relaxed their discipline. Arms well kept,

horses and accoutrements shewing marks of care, and the remains of regular though various uniforms distinctly preserved, shewed a pride in what they had been, and a readiness to resume their calling. For the present they stood aloof from both the contending parties; holding themselves free to join with either, and in the mean time ravaging the country with atrocious impartiality.

After having walked a couple of hundred yards from the spot where Gaspar was captured, Schenck and his followers reached another small detachment of his troop, who were mounted and in good order, forming the rear guard which he had there posted previous to the halt. Under the charge of this body was the slight baggage of the troop, consisting of a few rude tents, and large baskets of provender, with utensils for coarse cookery, some small barrels of gunpowder, bullets, and flints, and a quantity of spare arms of various kinds. These were slung across the backs of mules or

horses ; and about a dozen of the least heavy sort of waggons, shaped in the solid clumsiness of those days, were appropriated to the conveyance of the sick and wounded, with half a dozen beings who looked of the doubtful gender, but who were really women ; and a squalid creature in the costume of the priesthood, of which he was a degraded member. Such a person was a constant appendage to troops like those before us. Robbers and murderers as they were, they were still strict Catholics, in all the superstition of their sect ; and absolution at the hands of Fray Pedro, an unfrocked monk, and their flying chaplain, held them quite exempt to their own consciences from all other duties inculcated by christianity, or the forms required by the church. This Spanish friar was ever ready to lay the salve of his forgiveness on their consciences, and his presence was sure to doubly damnify their deeds by its outrageous mockery of religion.

The only one who claimed exemption from this reverend authority was the captain, Martin Schenck. Had nature not refused him the power of laughing, he would no doubt have laughed at the impious farces played by Fray Pedro. But tragedy was his forte; and he left the lighter parts to be filled by the wretches under his command, he standing aloof, indifferent to the scenes they acted.

Besides the objects thus enumerated, Gaspar saw before him in the little valley they occupied, two other individuals of a totally different character. These were two men in his own state of captivity, but bearing the evidence of infinitely worse treatment than he had suffered. One of them was old, and as venerable as grey locks and beard could make him, and he bore the badges of official respectability, in the silver chain and medal and white staff, which spoke him to be Provost Marshal of Flanders. The other, of middle age and vigorous form, was Louis Dranckaert of Liege,

the assistant of the former, under the title of lieutenant. This poor fellow shewed frightful marks of violence, having had both his ears recently cut off. Gaspar, stern as he could be on occasion, turned away disgusted from the pale and bleeding lieutenant, but to cast his eyes on the mangled bodies of ten or a dozen men, who bore the Provost's livery, and had been all put to death by the robbers after an encounter which had just taken place; and the troop whose approach had led to the Moriscoe's premature arrival amidst these scenes, had been returning from completing the destruction of the small escort, backed by which the Provost had had the temerity to summon the picaroons to surrender.

The miserable functionary, his grey head uncovered, and his garments torn and disfigured, lay on the ground beside his maimed assistant. They were tied back to back, and presented a doleful contrast in appearance; which afforded, however, matter of mingled merriment and

abuse to the abandoned women, who danced round them, with scurrilous gestures and vile jests.

As Schenck advanced into the little valley, he spoke, from time to time, a few words of command ; and some of his officers galloped off in different directions, posting videttes, and making dispositions that indicated a regular halt for the night. The mules were unladen, and provisions spread on the earth ; some tents were pitched, and portions of provender served out for the horses. All these operations went on quite independently of the dark business about to be acted ; and to prepare for which the captain had taken his station in the middle of the vale. Surrounded by the greater part of the troops, he stood there for a while, silently, and leaning on his huge rapier, his hands on the hilt, and his chin resting upon them. He had, however, given some signal, or whispered some orders to those near him, for the Provost and his lieutenant were roughly raised from the

earth, the cords which bound them together loosened, and they separately brought to stand opposite to Schenck. A similar signal, without any word being spoken, caused Gaspar to be dragged forward. The gloomy captain then spoke, with malignant irony of look and accent.

“ Most worshipful Provost Marshal, hear me ! In virtue of your servile function, you dared to cope with me. I have smote you, and your base crew. Are you ready to die ? ”

“ Martin Schenck, ” replied the old man, “ I have nought to expect from your mercy. I know my hour is come. I am ready, since it must be so ; and may Heaven pardon my sins ! ”

“ Louis Dranckaert, thou cropped lieutenant, thy persecutions against many a brave man cry out for vengeance. Prepare for death ! ”

“ Martin Schenck, thou cruel renegade, I scorn your ribaldry, and defy you, with my last

breath," said the lieutenant, in accents of despairing bitterness.

Schenck bit his lips and grinded his teeth, with suppressed rage.

"On with the work," cried he. "Let Fray Pedro do his duty."

The cords that bound the prisoners' arms were drawn still more tightly, and they writhed with pain. Large drops stood on the forehead of the old man, and rage and agony mingled together in the expression of Drankaert's ghastly visage. They were removed to a little distance from the circle, by a band of eight or ten too ready executioners ; and Gaspar expected every moment to see them struck to the ground by blade or bullet, or strung up like dogs to the branches of some overhanging tree. But a more shocking fate was meant for them, what in common phrase would be called a refinement of cruelty, but we cannot apply that epithet in any sense to the brutality that imagined it.

Standing out a little way from the skirts of the forest which surrounded the valley at all sides, were the crumbling remains of an old cork tree. It had been blasted by lightning, and had withered away by age, and all that was left was the shell of its trunk, dried up to the consistency of tinder, in which was a cavity capable of containing two men. Round this tree materials for a fire had been prepared by the odious women before mentioned ; and at the last words uttered by Schenck, a light was placed to it, and it was instantly in flames. The trunk soon caught fire, and the blaze rose all around it, leaving unharmed the dark hollow within, looking black as the purpose it was meant to serve.

The victims looked on this frightful place of death, and they saw what was intended for them. The Provost cast his eyes towards Heaven, and his hands opened out convulsively, but could not join together, so tightly was he pinioned. He prayed fervently, but did not

attempt to move from the spot. Dranckaert's visage, as he gazed on the cruel means of torture, assumed all the wildness of despair, but of that manly kind which does not shrink from, but rushes to a struggle with fate. He clenched his hands; stamped against the earth; gnashed his teeth; and loudly cursed his torturers. Some laughed at this, and mocked his rage. Others struck him, and strove to force him to silence, but in vain. Gaspar looked on at the scene, himself pinioned like a felon, and doubtful if he were not meant to share the doom of the others. But he forgot the fear of his own probable doom, while looking on the certainty of theirs; and he felt a thrill of horror, as he turned his eyes towards the furnace-looking tree, and the group close to it. The prisoners were forcibly placed on their knees; the furious lieutenant held down by four powerful men, who, with handkerchiefs upon his mouth, stopped the utterance of his imprecations. The women and a large part of the men knelt

around, attentively listening to the service for the dead, mumbled by Fray Pedro, who stood in the centre, close to the prisoners. This mockery of the priesthood held a crucifix before him,

“ And in his hand his breviary he bore,
That much was worn, but therein little read,
For of devotion he had little store ;”

and enveloped in the smoke that curled towards him from the burning tree, he might be thought a fiend of hell, reading the sentence of condemnation to the damned.

The ruffian who had the charge of the execution at length waved his sword, and caused a trumpet to sound, as the friar motioned to him that the rites were concluded. In a moment the kneeling guard arose, the women sprang up, and the doomed men were seized and hurried towards the tree. The Provost, exhausted by fear or resigned by fortitude, submitted patiently, and was thrust into the cavity through the encircling flames. But the united force of

as many men as could lay hands on Dranckaert was insufficient to master the gigantic strength he put forth. Bounding and struggling against all their efforts, his power seemed more than human. As they strove to tie his legs, his desperate plunges defied them. He struck several to the ground ; and tossing his head to and fro, like a baited bull, he made it a weapon fiercely effective. Several pistols and swords were held close to him ; but death by such means would have been mercy, and he courted their assault.

“ Not a shot, not a stroke !” cried the ruffian in command. “ In with him, in with him, alive into the flames !”

By this time Dranckaert had succeeded in freeing himself from the cloth which had been forced into his mouth and tied round his head. Then burst forth a torrent of execration from his foaming lips, which rose above the hoarse curses of his executioners, the screams of the female fiends, and the continued blast of the horns and trumpets.

“Fire and flame for ever on ye, dastard villains! Is this a death for a man! Cowards! slaves! you cannot, you shall not! Heaven shall crush ye! hell swallow you first!—Help, help, against these monsters!—Is there not one man among you, to send a bullet through my brains! Miscreants, set me free, or kill me as a soldier and a man! And you, Martin Schenck—I see you! cold-hearted wretch! Look at that old man—see his grey hairs scorching—his limbs cramped—see him suffocating, smothering, and burning! Curse on you; desperate and agonizing death to you! By flame or flood you shall perish!”

This fearful harangue was now attempted to be broken by the loathsome Fra Pedro, who in a fatal moment for himself, advanced his squalid face close to Dranckaert's, and, with mock solemnity, warned him to be in peace with all men, on pain of eternal, instead of temporary, fire! As if the sight of this odious thing had roused Dranckaert's expiring strength

above all previous effort, he now with one bound burst the thick cords that held him, and with a sudden grasp, he seized the friar by the throat in both his bony hands. While some of the robbers strove in vain to extricate their chaplain, the greater number pressed forward the group towards the flaming tree, which now began to crackle. The fire penetrated to the cavity, and deep groans from the Provost told they had reached his body. But Dranckaert's fingers were close locked together, in a gripe that no force but his own will, or the stroke of death might uncloset. He did not now speak. But as if satisfied with his revenge, he was pushed resistingly into the hollowed trunk, dragging the body of the priest close to him, and fixing his eyes on the features, convulsed by strangulation, and scorched by the flames.

At this instant a pistol shot was heard. Schenck, ever watchful, saw through an opening in the wood one of his videttes darting towards

them ; and he heard the loud war-cry that he loved the least, in fast pursuit.

“ A Bassenvelt ! a Bassenvelt ! ” was screamed in full chorus from a hundred throats ; and a volley of carbine shots whistled through the forest.

“ Up, up, and to arms ! ” cried the intrepid Schenck, and the call was echoed by his men. He was in an instant in his saddle ; and, taking the command of this guard, he posted himself the foremost towards what had been the rear, but was now changed to the front of his position. His eye seemed everywhere at once ; and the alarm spread from front to centre of the whole body, as though it ran along an electric chain. But the band that had been charged with the murderous task of destruction on the provost and his dauntless assistant, did not resign their work. There seemed still time enough for its completion ; but, happily, there was not.

Schenck and his followers expected, as usual,

a charge of cavalry from Bassenvelt's hussars ; and they knew that in this narrow pass a contest, if even ending in defeat and flight on their parts, might be a long one. But on this occasion the commander of the Walloon force adopted the better plan of making his men dismount at the entrance of the forest, and they immediately appeared on foot, their pikes and rapiers glistening through the trees.

“ Retreat ! retreat ! ” shouted the wary Schenck—“ off with the baggage mules, and let the waggons block up the road ! ”

As he uttered these words, and turned round to see them obeyed, a fresh volley was poured from the advancing foe, when his horse, struck by a bullet in the very brain, made one upward plunge, and then fell with his still undismounted rider to the earth.

At sight of this, the picaroons fled in every direction, the murdering executioners and the women along with the rest. Only two men remained near their fallen commander, and of

these one was mortally wounded, and the other dead. Their horses sprang away, and the whole band dispersed. Before Schenck could extricate himself from under his struggling charger, several of De Bassenvelt's men came up, and seeing who they had before them, they refused his demand for death, and prepared to secure him. Others, attracted by the blazing fire and the faint groans of the sufferers, ran forward and dragged them forth. Some released the Moriscoe, who ran towards the spot of the barbarous scene he had shudderingly witnessed.

The Provost was fearfully burnt, and apparently at his last gasp. Dranckaert soon revived ; but when he loosened his grasp from the friar's throat, it was proved to have been indeed the grasp of death, for the miserable wretch lay strangled on the grass.

As soon as the bustle of Gaspar's feelings allowed him a moment for thought, and having ascertained that the old provost was not be-

yond the reach of recovery, he hurried to the place where Schenck had fallen, with a view to save him from violence, for he remembered that but for him the robber's dagger had pierced his heart. He found him on his legs and unhurt, silently and sullenly listening to the harangue of an important looking personage, who evidently was the chief in command of the hostile troops; while the dismounted detachment, of full a hundred more, whose quick attack had so completely succeeded, advanced in regular order through the woods. A body of horsemen of still larger force came trooping forward, and dashed on at full speed along the road; the personage just mentioned gave his loud command in the Walloon jargon, made even worse than it is in itself by a thick Spanish accent—"No quarter for the outlaws!—extermination to the picaroons—no prisoner but this one!"

The person who spoke this with stentorian lungs, was a tall, gaunt man, mounted on a

fine horse of true Flanders breed, and, in the custom of the commanders of those days, dressed in a half suit of mail. He wore a black cuirass and helmet, but his thighs and legs had no protection beyond thick buff breeches and huge boots. His loose sleeves were of dark purple cloth, the uniform of the regiment; a blue silk scarf hung from his left shoulder, and from his right a baldrick of black leather, in which was the shining steel scabbard of the rapier that he flourished in his hand. His high-peaked saddle was almost a breast-work before, and a thickly-folded brown cloak formed a back-work behind: and there hung at either side a leathern bag for provisions for man and beast. His heels were garnished with spurs of immense length. A brace of brass-mounted petronels filled his bear-skin holsters; a long lance stood in its rest in the right side stirrup; and he thus presented the figure of a fully accoutred officer of De Bassenvelt's black Walloons.

The common soldiers differed in their costume only by the absence of the scarf, and the addition of a belt, holding a bandelier for powder and bullets for their carabines, the use of which, for cavalry, had been lately adopted in the regiment, in imitation of a change made by Prince Maurice in the equipment of the Dutch troops. Gaspar, who had a quick eye for military matters, thought as these troopers defiled along, each man leading a horse for those who did the service of foot soldiers, or Fantassins, as they were called, that he had never seen among the boasted veterans of the great Duke of Parma, such fine looking, gallant, and well appointed fellows. During the few minutes consumed in their passing by, the commander gave his instructions to the several officers under his orders for the dispersion, and, if possible, the destruction of the marauders; and reserving but a few men with him, he renewed the harangue which he had been addressing to the captive Schenck, when Gaspar hastened to the spot.

“ No, Martin Schenck, death is a boon not to be granted to a man like you. My orders were to spare you—to force life upon you ; and a hard task it was for *me*, who have given death to hundreds—to me, whose sword blade wears an everlasting blush from the slaughter this arm has done ! Know that you are now prisoner to none other than Don Diego Leonis, so called from having killed single handed three lions on the Barbary coast, lieutenant-colonel in De Bassenvelt’s hussars, and one who should be, if honours were the meed of valour, a Knight of the Golden Fleece long since. Know that—”

“ Be you who you may, obey your orders—take me hence, but do not smother me with the smoke of your boastings,” said Schenck, with a sternness that utterly discomfited the vapouring Spaniard. He turned himself two or three times half round in his demipique saddle, under the pretence of looking to his detachment, although they were all out of

sight and in hot pursuit of the picaroons, as was told by the straggling shots sounding through the wood.

Don Diego, however, recovered his presence of speech, and rising up awfully in his broad stirrups, he looked fiercely at Schenck, and said—

“ You know the impunity with which you may wag a tongue at one who only wields a sword. You are my prisoner, and I pity your misfortune, while I brook your insolence : but were you free, Martin Schenck, by our holy Lady of Lerida, I would lift you from the earth, and toss you up so high towards heaven, that you should be dead before you touched *terra-firma* again !”

“ A good rhodomontade, my brave braggart ! and, depend on't, when I *am* free, you shall have an opportunity of redeeming your boast ! Lead me away !”

“ Well ordered, great commander, with nought to command ! But you must now learn to obey, instead of bullying ! Another

word will draw my gauntlet towards your mouth ; and if I once place my hand upon it, the blazing breath of Vesuvius could not remove it till *yours* be stifled !”

Satisfied with this volcanic burst of eloquence, and afraid of some unceremonious retort, the Don proceeded once more to give out his orders for the safe conduct of his prisoner, and the care-taking of the Provost and his lieutenant, to whose rescue he had specially advanced. He also, with the caution of a good soldier, attended to the advices brought back to him at intervals by scouts from the party in advance ; and being satisfied that the outlaws made no effectual resistance, and that the purport of his expedition was fully answered, he prepared with no small triumph to convey his several trophies to Welbasch Castle, where he stated his colonel, Count Ivon, to be waiting, “ not doubtingly, for he knows his man—but anxiously, for the accomplishment of this arduous task.”

As these preparations were making, and while the Provost and Louis Dranckaert were carefully placed on rudely constructed litters, and Schenck securely fastened on the back of a large mule, Don Diego's eye fell upon Gaspar; and he was not slow in inquiring every particular as to his place of abode, his destination, and his sojourn with the robbers. When the Moriscoe told as much of himself as he chose to reveal, and stated that he was bound to Welbasch Castle with the intention of joining De Bassenvelt's force, the commander instantly assured him of safe conduct, and the speedy means of arrival. He pointed to one of the robbers' horses, which had fled on the discharge which killed its owner, and which had been caught and secured by a man of Don Diego's body guard.

“There,” said he to Gaspar, “is the just return for the loss of your own steed, good fellow. Mount it—pursue your way, and have the glory of bearing the first news of my

victory ! Speak moderately of my valour, for it needs no trumpeter. Talk not of my clemency ; be silent as to my magnanimity. The name of Don Diego Leonis is in itself a warrant of all. Say only you were sent by *me*, and Fate itself will turn pale at the very shadow which my coming casts before it. Away ! and speed you ! The echo of your horse's hoofs shall herald the advance of a hero !”

Gaspar, scarcely venturing to believe the reality of this fortunate termination to his adventure, mounted his new steed, and found him at once of high mettle and tractable. He obeyed most willingly the orders of Don Diego, and departed at good speed, and recovering his composure by the time he passed the Sambre without let or difficulty, he turned his thoughts once more to the absorbing subject of his mission, and seemed to look upon the stirring interruptions it had experienced, but as visioned fancies rising on his brain.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE broad disk of the evening sun, was sinking behind the forests of Hul and Marliere. The little stream that separates them was tinged by the red gleams which, reflected from a mass of fleecy clouds, spread far across the Meuse, and full upon every object on its eastern bank. The most prominent of those, in that part where the river runs its course directly northward from Dinant to Namur, (and nearly midway between the villages of Rouillon and Bouvignes,) was the Castle of

Welbasch, on a high ridge, that presents an almost perpendicular face of granite to the scorching rays which strike against it from noon to sunset.

All the way down this steep descent, nature had formed stations of almost impregnable defence. Bastions and ramparts rose, in appearance, in regular lines, so as to deceive the most practised eye which viewed them from the western side of the stream, into the belief that the art of fortification had been laboriously practised there. At the foot was the close built and gothic village, containing forty or fifty houses, and an old ruinous church, which claimed an antiquity even more remote than the castle that crowned the heights. An inscription, scarcely legible, vouched that it was built by Hugo de Warfusée, (better known in the old chronicles as the rich Miller of Awys,) some while about the year 1100. The castle was nearly fifty years younger, being commenced by Messire Libert, the grandson of

Hugo, and finished by continual additions of his three sons and successors, until it became one of the most extensive, and incomparably the most important, of the fortresses that guarded that line of frontier. Passing through several generations of this ancient race, in direct descent from one of the sons of Raes de Warfusée, it finally came into the family of Bassenvelt, in the person of Gerard, surnamed the Saracen, from a strange fancy which possessed him after his return from the Holy Land, and of which the castle itself bore evidence, up to the very time of which we now treat.

This Gerard, who had in the furor of enthusiasm sold all his estates, with the exception of this castle and its grounds, and followed, about the year 1275, in the train of the latest fanatics that formed the eighth crusade, was made prisoner by an Egyptian chieftain, and passed several years in slavery. By some lucky but unrecorded chance, he saved the life

of his master, who set him free, on the condition of his never again bearing arms against the followers of the Prophet. Gerard returned safely to his native land, and in the fantastic spirit of the times, he approached his own castle disguised as a pilgrim, intending to himself and his Chatelaine, the delight of a romantic surprise. A night's lodging was accorded him and a supper as well. During the convivial discourse of the menials at the repast, the disguised master was inspired with suspicions not favourable to his own honour or the fidelity of his spouse. He accordingly repaired, in the silent hour of midnight, when the castle was wrapped in sleep, to the well-remembered chamber of the Chatelaine. She was not alone. A handsome young page supplied the place of her long-absent lord. In the excess of his rage, Gerard killed his wife on the spot, but reserved the page for a more lingering revenge. The furious chieftain made himself known, was placed in the possession of his rights, and

was soon after seized with a phrenzy, quite unique. He believed himself to be a Turk ; adopted the Asiatic costume ; decorated his château in the style of an eastern harem ; filled it with the daughters of his villagers, whom he forcibly seized from their fathers and lovers, and made the guilty page take the place of their guardian, with every possible security against his repeating his old offence.

In three years this madman died ; but in that period he had found means to metamorphose the exterior of his castle, in complete unison with its internal masquerade. Over the fine substratum of gothic architecture, he had placed a layer, as might be said, of that entitled saracenic. Towers and turrets, ogives and eyletholes, were all intermixed and surmounted with decorations suited to the Minarets of the east ; and under the cornices and parapets were rows of turbaned heads looking grimly down, in different burlesque expressions, as suited the pleasantry of the sculptor. So

the castle remained, for centuries after the death of Count Gerard, who did not, however, extend his innovations to any of the more important characteristics of the place. It gained under his descendants continual additions to its strength, and at the epoch of our story it was (in the possession of Count Ivon, and garrisoned by his regiment of Walloons) looked on as a place of such consequence, as to make its occupier independent, in proportion as it was deemed impregnable.*

On the skirts of the little alder grove, the outmost plants of which dipped their branches at every breath of wind into the river, stood Gaspar the Moriscoe, gazing upwards on this

* Many of these traditional particulars have been attached to the Château de Camblin-Chatelain, near Bethune, in Artois ; and there is an old provincial ballad recording the story, commencing thus :

“ De la dame de Camblin
Qui veut ouir l’aventure ?”

and ending

“ Que les Turcs les plus méchans
Ne sont par les mecréans.”

grotesque yet formidable fortress, and anxiously watching the rays of the setting sun, as they sloped down the opposite granite ridge and gradually left the lower crags in shade. The Moriscoe had no keen perception of the beauties of inanimate nature, or he would have paused long, and looked with delight on the exquisite landscape around him. But his glances all turned inwards, to the contemplation of his own deep thoughts, or went abroad into a scene of fancied triumph, when he should mark Beatrice's seducer bleeding at his foot. He stood sufficiently concealed among the brushwood to avoid observation from the castle or village; and while his horse snatched a few mouthfuls of young leaves from the tree to which he was tied, Gaspar gazed with mortal ken upon the castle, while his mental vision pierced the recesses it could not enlighten.

The sun at length went down, and his disappearance from the horizon was announced by

the discharge of one gun from the castle battlements, which echoed far across the river into the distant forest. A dark curl was on the stream; and the trout rose eagerly at the spring flies which already came out in swarms. The light alder twigs were ruffled; and the river trembled, as the chill north breeze came freshly up against the current. But Gaspar saw not these little accidents of beauty, which float on the bosom of creation, like the glittering insects sporting on the water's surface. He only watched for the approach of the promised boat and his mysterious guide, if indeed it were not still possible that he had left him behind, in the person of Schenck, to whom his suspicions seemed magnetically to turn.

Armed, as the Moriscoe now might call himself, with the privilege of Don Diego's message, he could calculate on safe entry into Welbasch Castle, and fair welcome to himself and his intelligence. But a repugnance to steal

into the bosom he meant to stab, to follow up the words of friendship with the blow of death, rose upon Gaspar's conscience, which was not callous to generous impressions. He had rather not have been Don Diego's messenger. He wished for no more than entrance to Count Ivon's castle, as a mere stranger, and admission to his presence, as on a simple matter of business. He therefore resolved to wait patiently awhile, to see if his promised companion would appear, ere he presented himself as the special and confidential herald of good news, which was so soon to be forgotten, in the deed he meant to perpetrate. Thus Gaspar reasoned with himself; but he, in fact, began to feel the want of support. The better part of his nature already faltered, as he pictured to himself this chieftain, in his pride of command, in his revelry of love, to be struck to the heart by his hand, and turning his last looks and thoughts towards *her*, whose existence might be severed by the stroke which

was to end her bliss. *It* was guilty, to be sure—so was *she*—so was *he*—yet they were but mortals, and flesh was weak, and passion strong; and so the Moriscoe argued *with* himself, and half *for* them; when, as if to force down these thoughts of weakness, the looked-for boat came silently across the stream, rowed by a single man, whose cap and furred doublet of light blue were clearly visible before he had passed half way. A cloak which hung on his shoulders was left open at the breast, as if purposely to shew this token by which the Moriscoe was to recognize him.

As soon as Gaspar saw this associate, his heart bounded, but scarcely with joy. It seemed, certainly, to fling away the doubts and misgivings that had begun to press on it; yet it felt the removal not a relief, but rather as a stripping off of a mantle which had comfortably clothed the naked purport with which it was filled. Gaspar did not thrill with that wild energy which had before inspired him, as

he stepped into the boat, leading his horse along with him, in obedience to the silent beckon of the masked person by whom it was guided. But as he trod upon the side, he almost started back again. He seemed to plant his foot on the threshold of crime; and the question flashed irresistibly on his mind, "Have I a right to kill this man?" He hesitated, and must have looked what he felt, for the boatman whispered to him,

"Come in, come in! There is no time for hesitation now, we shall be observed and suspected."

Gaspar made a sudden spring forward, and stood fixed and statue-like in the boat. But his emotion did not stand still. He was at once convinced that his present companion was not the strange horseman. Not only was the whispering voice quite different, but the stature of this person, though he sat while he plied his oar, was evidently much taller, and in no respect but in an air of youth and activity the

same. As he looked on him, a doubt of treachery once more ran through his mind. Then a feeling that his former companion had fallen into the hands of the robbers; and then those perplexing doubts of others, which are natural to a man not sure of nor satisfied with himself. But the rower pulled his boat across, with no display of suspicion that he was suspected; and in the few minutes thus occupied, the following short colloquy took place.

“ Have you the token ?”

“ I have ;” and with these words Gaspar handed over the Governor’s ring.

“ You are the brother of Beatrice ?”

“ Yes.”

“ You are ready to revenge her ?”

“ I *am* !”

“ You are sent by Don Juan de Trovaldo for that purpose ?”

“ Yes.”

“ Then falter not. The blow once struck,

the dishonour of your race is revenged, you are no more a slave; and I shall have ample means of rewarding your courage, and repairing her wrongs. Speak not a word to me. Follow my guidance; enter the castle; announce your assumed name and pretended purpose; and demand to see the captain on duty for the day. Through him ask a private interview with De Bassenvelt—and then do your duty!”

A finger slipped under the mask, and placed on the speaker's lip, was the signal for silence on both sides, and not a word more was uttered. The boat was moored just above the village. The passengers both landed; and Gaspar advanced, leading his horse close to his guide, who took a winding path outside the village skirts, that led to the first of a succession of gates visible up the hill, communicating with the fortress above. To this gate the guide pointed, then raised his clenched fist above his head, shaking it the while, in a manner to denote some impressive meaning; and imme-

diately disappeared round one of the craggy points of rock.

Gaspar, left thus once more to himself, hurried forward without a moment's pause; and having undergone the strict examination of person and purpose to which strangers of all classes were subject, he was admitted into the precincts of the fortress; and passing along under an escort from the guard, he successively traversed the various outworks, bridges, and moats, and finally found himself within the castle walls. Thus in the very heart of his enterprise, all the boldness of his nature returned. He was no longer irresolute. The struggle between good feeling and fierce passion was over. The latter had triumphed completely; and his mind had no room for thoughts or images, but those of injury sustained and vengeance to come.

During the time occupied in the Moriscoe's movements, the evening repast of the garrison of Welbasch Castle had been merrily going forward. Count Ivon de Bassenvelt sat at the

head of his table, doing its honours with all the grace of well-bred conviviality, blending the joyous tone of social life with a sufficiency of ceremonial — the medium between the boisterous manners of the country, and the unjoyous etiquette of the court. Count Ivon's whole bearing gave evidence of a close acquaintance with the best society in various countries; and a natural current of good fellowship was passed, as it were, through the gauze of refinement, but it was not overstrained. He was a Walloon by birth and early education; hardy, active, and brave, as his countrymen have at all times been. But much of his life had been spent in the Spanish capital, after he had finished his education at Salamanca, with intervals of service in the armies of Philip II. in France and Italy. He was, at the time of his introduction to our readers, in his twenty-fifth year; and he had even then obtained the reputation of being one

of the most valiant soldiers and accomplished libertines of his age.

On the accession of Albert and Isabella to the sovereignty of the Low Countries (arch-dukes, as they were called, without distinction of genders), Count Ivon was chosen by Albert, under whom he had served at the sieges of Calais, Ardres, and Amiens, as one of the suite by which he was accompanied into Brabant. Ivon gladly accepted his appointment. All the feelings of home attachment were awakened. Early recollections crowded on his mind; love of change gave a fresh impulse to his satisfaction. But a deeper sentiment than any of these made him rejoice in this new turn in his destiny. He had in him an inherent love of liberty, and a prompt sense of justice, which joined to excite his sympathy in the struggle which had so long been maintained by the Netherlands against the powerful tyranny of Spain. He marked every step of the country towards the freedom she fought for; but he grieved to

find his native province degraded again under the Spanish yoke from the position it had for some time held, as a member of "the peace of religion," by virtue of which, a community of interests and an equality of rights; a merging of sectarian opinions in the common cause, had been fixed as the basis of the national charter. Ivon felt that Brabant might be regenerated; and he glowed with the thought that *he* might be the means.

With these views, he obtained the Archduke's permission to visit his old paternal castle, and the remnant of property attached to it; and when once there, he contemplated with delight the facilities offered by the place towards the furtherance of his design. He had the old furniture polished up, and established a hasty and imperfect household. The country was just at that period infested by such marauders as those whom we have brought before our readers. Long arrears of pay gave an excuse for the numerous desertions from the

archduke's army, which ran to an alarming extent through the Spanish and Italian veterans; and many bands were formed, made up of all that could be conceived of desperate and dangerous. To oppose these brigands, heavy taxes were levied on the people of the country; and they were often forced to contribute in person as well as purse toward the suppression of the common pest. Independent levies were raised by several of the seigneurs, to act for a limited time against them; and among others, De Bassenvelt applied for and obtained a commission to organise a regiment of six hundred men.

With military talent and tact far above the common, ardour and activity of mind and body, and the inspiring object next his heart, Count Ivon raised and equipped his regiment in an incredibly short period. In the free system of recruiting at that time practised, he found no difficulty in obtaining well disciplined veterans, discharged from or volun-

tarily giving up the service of the archdukes, or the neighbouring German states, where Palgraves and Rhinegraves retained for temporary occasions bodies of armed followers, trained for warfare and tried in its pursuit. The funds for this purpose were obtained by Count Ivon solely from his own resources. He sold to the readiest bidder (which he considered to the best advantage) all that remained of his inheritance, but the castle and its immediate appurtenances, and the village, which might be considered a part of them. He laid in a store of provisions and ammunition. He rejected offers of assistance from the states of the province (to their great satisfaction, the want of money being at its most ruinous height), for he would incur no obligation that might be turned to a reproach in the course which he meant to follow.

In a very few months De Bassenvelt's preparations for the avowal of his project were nearly ripe ; but before they were, and ere

the complete formation of his troop, he had made himself and it formidable to the freebooters, and famous throughout the provinces, by a series of deeds, the success of which gave to temerity the stamp of prudence. He soon cleared his own neighbourhood for leagues around, of the cruel bands that had so long ravaged it; and the gratitude of the people of several districts raised their admiration almost to idolatry. He was already in their minds a hero; but he had, as yet, done nothing to make him appear so to his own, except, perhaps, in *one* instance of self-denial and self-command, which was, however, of a personal and not a political nature. Added to this sketch, the acknowledgment that he was too notoriously addicted to the licentious habits of the times and of his peculiar course of life, and a tolerably correct notion may be formed of Count Ivon de Bassenvelt, as he presided at the supper table, where we have introduced him to the reader.

The eating-hall of the castle of Welbasch differed in no wise from those common to such ancient buildings, and a hundred times described, except in its characteristic additions of eastern ornaments, and even these had in a great measure crumbled away, or been defaced by the successors of Gerard the Saracen. The black oak floor and wainscoting—the high, narrow casements, with squares of stained glass irregularly mixed with those of the common kind, which replaced each broken pane of costly manufacture—the massive mantelpiece of black marble, dug from the celebrated quarries of Namur, were all distinctive of the old buildings contiguous to that we describe; and, in the fashion of the days, helmets, banners, and battle-pieces hung round the walls, to remind the feasters of their fathers' calling and their own.

In this room were laid out every day at noon, and again at sunset, two tables. The one at the upper end was composed of covers for twenty or

more, and at it sat the count, the chaplain, the officers of De Bassenvelt's regiment who were present at the castle, and not on outward duty, and such visitors as might claim the hospitality of the place. The second table was meant for the inferior members of the household above the rank of mere domestics, such as the genealogist, the librarian, the master of the horse, the chapel organist, and two or three more, with a few vacant places for such persons of the same grades as might accompany the visitors, or who might by chance come separately to the castle.

On the present occasion, Count Ivon filled his chair at the head of the board, dressed in a suit of finest purple broad cloth of Liege, richly embroidered with silver lace; his *pourpoint* profusely studded with fillagree buttons; a surcoat, lined with white taffeta, hanging from his shoulders; and his loose breeches, slashed with blue silk; while boots of chamois leather wrinkled down his legs, and shewed his

silk hose and well-turned limbs. His dark hair, curling loosely on his shoulders, gave a softened expression to his countenance, which was attractive rather from its animated and versatile character than from the possession of any distinct line of beauty. Beside him sat a youth in a handsome suit of grey. Eight or ten officers, in the uniform of the corps, had their seats midway down, leaving several vacant at intervals; and at the foot sat another, who, unlike the rest, was fully armed and accoutred in the same style as Don Diego Leonis had appeared to Gaspar. This was the captain of the day, Count Lyderic de Roulemonde, a young man of fine appearance, the chosen friend and confidant of his colonel, who, in his tour of duty appeared, as was the custom, thus armed and ready for immediate service.

As the evening gun was fired, this officer had left the castle to go his rounds to the battlements and outposts, to see that the dif-

ferent guards were on the alert, and receive their various reports. Supper had been begun ere he returned; and as he re-entered the hall he found De Bassenvelt, in his wonted manner, passing the wine-flask round, and stimulating his friends by social example, and taking every occasion to instil into them a portion of his own spirit, thus preparing them for the great purpose he had not yet avowed.

“ Well, well, reverend Sir,” said he, turning to Father Jerome, the chaplain and also curate of the little parish and village of Welbasch, “ it may all be true for what we know; but the real witchcraft is that which inspires brave men with the love of country, and bright women with enthusiasm for the pursuits of those they love! So fill, gentlemen, another goblet of Rhein-wine to patriotism and love!”

“ Yes, my son, that is very well from your mouth; but you must not stop mine, nor

slur over my argument with slight and ribaldry. I repeat that a belief in magic is consistent with sound theology, in unison with holy writ, and proved to be just by this very book of Martin Delrio, of Antwerp, one of the most learned and pious men of these miserable and troublous days."

The good old priest having uttered these words peevishly, laid his hand on the huge Latin volume he had that morning received from Brussels, and which had led to this discussion ; and he was inclined to translate again into the barbarous dialect of the province several of the passages which had before provoked the laughter of his irreverent auditors. But Count Ivon had heard enough of the fanatic author of the absurd work in question, and he was resolved to stifle the garrulity of the old curate, whose after-supper topic was sure to be some abstruse theological quirk or sectarian quibble, started by the fierce disputes just then in fashion. When, therefore, the

old man quoted, as from some oracle, the ravings of Francis Coster, of Mechlin, called by his admirers “the Hammerer of the Heretics,” or some burst of bigotry from the Jesuits of Louvain, De Bassenvelt contrived to turn the subject into channels leading to his own purposes, but was rarely able to do so without receiving some tart reproof from the testy chaplain.

“No, Father Jerome,” said he, in reply to the old man’s last retort, “I lay my protest against further citations. You have read enough to confuse us all, who cannot cope with your folio. We are true believers, and admit every thing; and as we swallow all your authorities, you must not refuse to do as much by ours. Here, boy!” added he to the varlet who stood behind his chair, “another flagon of Hocheim, and place a fresh one beside Count Lyderic—I hear his spurs and rapier rattling along the passage. Come, gentlemen, and you, my good father, I pledge ye all

in a bumper to friendship—and here comes its living illustration—health to you, Lyderic ! we drank to you in spirit, if not by name ! Why, how now, valiant captain ! you look as gloomy as if an enemy were at the walls !”

Lyderic, who had entered while Count Ivon thus addressed him, (and as the testy old chaplain retired, his oracle under his arm,) advanced with a serious air to the head of the table, to deliver the written guard-reports to his colonel. He smiled, but as if smiling were a pain to him, as the latter rallied him on his grave looks, and answered—

“ Excuse me if I seem serious while on duty. When the reports are read, I shall wash down my gravity with a full horn of Rhein-wine, and return my commander’s pledge with due humility for the honour he vouchsafed me.”

A scowling and satirical leer accompanied this speech, as Lyderic strode to his former place, looking downwards the while, except

while he threw one glance that spoke something, and that obscurely, to the youth who sat at De Bassenvelt's side.

“All is right, it seems,” said the latter, as he ran his quick eye over the reports, not paying any apparent attention to the answer he had received. “You found nothing to mention specially?”

“No—if I may not except the arrival of a stranger, whom I observed crossing the ferry above the village.”

“Who passed him over?”

“A view from the southern postern could scarcely let me distinguish that,” answered Lyderic, as if some offence had been conveyed in the question.

“No matter,” exclaimed Count Ivon; “if his business be to us, we shall soon know his introduction. What sort of person may he be?”

“I should think him a Spanish soldier, from his plumed morion and his horses-housings.”

“ Then he is likely to come from Brussels. Another message, I warrant it, from the archduke to appear at court ; but they may summon me in vain ! Time is too precious at a juncture like this, to be wasted at court revelries. I record my refusal ere the invitation comes. You all bear witness, my friends, that while my distracted country needs my presence, I shall move in no direction that her interests do not point to. Fill up once more, gentlemen ! and he who loves Brabant will see his liquor on a level with his goblet’s brim ! This round is to the regeneration of our province, for it is ours, all of us, by adoption even if not by birth. Drink, my friends, and then *think* ! Let reflection aid the digestion of your wine ! We are all Walloons to-day ! ”

“ Ay, are we, Count,” exclaimed a rough Saxon, the major of the corps, whose blue eye and fair hair and beard gave an air of

mildness to a countenance expressing in its other parts a daring almost ferocious.

“ We are Walloons in heart and mind—the bright coin you have so profusely given us has naturalized us all. This is the age for soldiers of fortune ! The land that pays the best is mine ! Then here’s to Brabant ! and may her iron mines be alchymized into gold !” and he emptied his brimming goblet at a draught.

“ I cannot, with your permission, Colonel, let the sentiment of my friend and comrade here pass by without some comment,” said a tall, rawboned, and red-headed Scotch captain, with a puritanical whine more unpleasantly flavouring his northern pronunciation of the Walloon French, spoken by the whole party : “ such a speech might have come well from a Schwarzreiter or Lanznecht of a century back ; but I hope that these mercenary notions do not apply to gentlemen who sell their swords in a just quarrel, to root out robbers, or cut

off corruption. I therefore drink regeneration to Brabant! and I hope it will begin at the right end, by letting in the pure light of reformation, and—”

“ Hold there !” cried three or four Walloons and a Spaniard, rising at once, and joining their voices together. “ No fling at our holy church — no Calvinistic doctrines here — we are Catholics—no image breakers !”

“ Gentlemen, if you will but hear me,” cried the Scot, outvoicing all the others—“ if you will but let me finish my sentence—”

“ No, no !” exclaimed they, “ retract your aspersions. Count Ivon ! Colonel ! we call on you to preserve the compact of the regimental rule—no man is to speak of religion but Father Jerome, the chaplain ; and he only in Latin, which few of us understand. The subject is forbidden. No man shall insult our pure Catholic faith !”

“ Who talked of your faith, or imagined there was such a thing among you ?” vociferated

the choleric Saxon, striking the table fiercely with his fist. “Is this the example you give of regeneration, forsooth! Do you mean to set upon this brave foreigner, and put him down? He is a Calvinist—ye are Catholics—well, what of that? I am neither one nor the other, nor do I see a tankard of Schwarz-bier of difference between you on that point. But I will stand by him against foul play.”

At these words several hands were placed on hilts, and blades began to shine out. The chairs were flung aside and every one stood up except De Bassenvelt and the youth by his side, Count Lyderic, and another officer, an Irishman, and who was called on by the contending parties several times before he stirred or spoke. But when he saw them all ranged for fight, he stood up, and drawing his sword, coolly exclaimed, in French that was larded with even a broader brogue than that of the Scot,

“Now, gentlemen, that ye are really ready

for work, I am at your service. I see how the matter is. You are seven against two—no great odds, if courage is at the weak side. You are seven good Catholics against two heretics. Then, in the name of the blessed Virgin, and my own Saint Patrick, here I stand in a line with the other two. My heart is Catholic, but my sword must be heretic—for the devil himself, or Luther into the bargain, should have fair play, if the quarrel was his.”

Then devoutly crossing himself, he took his place beside the Scot, and cried out,

“ Now, Colonel, for the love of Christianity, give us the word !”

Lyderic looked on with indifference at the brawl; but De Bassenvelt, with a strong expression of dignified resentment in his air and voice, now stood up and spoke.

“ Gentlemen, officers of my regiment, comrades, is this as it ought to be? Is this our bond of friendship together? Is this your regard for me?—and must I remind you of it—

is this a scene to act before a woman? Does the kersey jerkin that covers a fair form, shut out the respect due to the sex it conceals? For shame, for shame! put up your swords—sit down to table again; let each man fill his neighbour's cup, and laugh at his own wrath. Come, Beatrice, stand up and vouch to these fiery men that their swords shall soon have better tilting places than the breasts of friends and patriots. Listen, comrades — she speaks to you.”

“Gentlemen,” said the apparent youth, rising firmly, yet gracefully, an air of chivalry thrown into a feminine demeanour, “I thought my sex no secret to you—you have, until now, respected it. I see you are ashamed of this child's play. I can add nothing to what your colonel has said. But be assured there is better work preparing for you than such as this. You will soon see this feeble hand wielding what weapon it can best grasp, in the cause of him who cannot afford to lose one arm of

yours. Up bumpers to the brim ! and quaff to the name of the deliverer of Brabant, Ivon de Bassenvelt !”

As Beatrice spoke this, her face beamed beauty, in brightness almost too dazzling. It was more than mere woman’s fondness that filled her eyes, as she fixed them on Count Ivon. Her inspiring air threw a contagion on those she addressed. In a moment every rapier rattled in its sheath. Every hand, so lately hostile, was clasped in friendly pressure with another ; and the old helms that hung round the walls echoed with the chorus of loud shouts to the name of De Bassenvelt.

As soon as these acclamations subsided a little, he once more spoke :

“ Enough, my friends—more than the mention of my name can merit. This has been perhaps abrupt—’tis premature at least. But by and bye, when our brave companions return from their expedition ; when the work of our commission is announced, for I feel already it

is done, and the country freed from its unlicensed spoilers, my whole design shall be told. This very night shall make ye masters of news that I hope will fill ye with rejoicing. And now let the Lethe of good fellowship close o'er the scene of this hour.—It is gone for ever from your minds ! Let each man place his hand on his heart. Spirits like you require no words. A warrior's hand is a warrior's guarantee. Enough ! the bond is signed," continued Count Ivon, as each brawny hand was laid upon its bearer's breast. " Now we may fitly receive the stranger, even though he bear the bidding of a tyrant."

Scarcely were the words finished, and the cheerful hum of harmony restored, when a demand for the captain of the day to see a Spanish recruit was sent in ; and on Lyderic rising from the chair where he had sullenly sat during the late exciting scene, Count Ivon told him to take his place again, and ordered the inquirer to be brought directly into the full assembly.

Gaspar the Moriscoe was accordingly ushered into the room ; and he stood for a minute or two near the door, with a fixed look of gloom upon his sallow face.

CHAPTER IX.

ALL eyes were immediately turned on the stranger, while Count Ivon asked him to declare his name, and the purport of his visit. He replied according to Don Juan's instructions, but not with the steady coolness he had promised to himself, for he had instantly recognised his sister, and the agitation of his high-wrought feelings could scarcely be repressed.

“ Well, my brave soldier, I have done you injustice, in supposing you the herald of ty-

ranny," said Count Ivon, in answer to Gaspar's request to be admitted into the regiment, he having produced his various certificates, and handed them to Lyderic. "We have still room for you. Our regiment is full; but in times like these a supplementary reserve of gallant fellows is good to have, and we *have* such. To-morrow you shall be enrolled. Pass me those papers, Lyderic. You will take charge of this recruit, and attach him to your troop. I see here," continued he, again addressing Gaspar, "you are stated to be a Biscayan. But your character of face would rather speak you from the south: Murcia or Andalusia produces such as yours. I have seen such in the valley of the Alpuxarras."

The careless tone of these remarks did not call for a reply, but Gaspar feared they might attract the observation of Beatrice, and draw her looks upon him. He therefore turned his eyes aside, and gazed with apparent ease, but real anxiety, on the objects around.

Count Ivon continued to examine the papers with an air of business, which is the sure accompaniment of real talent ; and as his eye fixed on the feigned discharge of the supposed trooper from the Spanish service, he looked full upon Gaspar, and asked him if he had any personal knowledge of Don Juan de Trovaldo, whose name was affixed to his discharge ? Gaspar, taken by surprise at this abrupt question, altogether unprepared for so public an examining, and afraid of betraying himself to Beatrice, hesitated awhile, and thus added to his confusion. He was at length about to stammer forth an answer, when De Bassenvelt exclaimed,

“ No matter—I shall press no question that may embarrass you, my friend. We shall have time enough for such inquiries as I need to make. But I know Don Juan means me a kind service ; and on information not long since conveyed to me, I was led to believe that I might look for it at your hands. But sit you down

at yonder table. Our worthy genealogist will do its honours, in a way fitting the habits of my ancestry, whose ways he knows almost better than he does my own. Hark-ye, Paul Cuyper, see that our recruit is made free of the castle. Lyderic, as I mean him for your troop, you will look that he has good quarters. After supper, I myself will talk with him. You have nought, my friend, to speak that needs immediate utterance?"

Gaspar wholly thrown out of the track he had expected to follow, by the rapidity and ease of Count Ivon's half expressed accusation, could not at once reply to the simplest question. The whole scene in which he found himself, tended to confuse him. He had been used to military life and soldier men; but those he had mixed with were servile agents, without thought or enthusiasm; while they whom he now looked at had an air of free and unembarrassed excitement quite new to him. Beatrice's presence, in the habiliments of man-

hood and by the side of her seducer, shamelessly joining in orgies unsuited to her sex, of itself caused a conflict between anger and grief; and to complete the Moriscoe's disquiet, the sight of his intended victim depressed instead of inflaming him. He had no presence of mind, as we call the faculty of prompt combinations of thought. There was a singleness and intensity of purpose within him, which (as with all men who can do but one thing at a time) disabled him from attending to auxiliary points on which the success of the main purpose depended. It was no wonder then, if the embarrassed Moriscoe became an object of suspicion to the man he meant to murder.

Attempting, however, to recover his self-possession, Gaspar, in a faltering manner, delivered the substance of his adventure with the picaroons; and finally announced Don Diego's triumphant approach with his single prisoner.

“What! Martin Schenck at last in my

power!" cried De Bassenvelt, rising from his seat with great vivacity; "this is intelligence of price! This, my friends, is indeed good news; but patience, patience awhile. No ignoble warfare against robber bands is to be yours henceforth. If Schenck be taken, the confederacy is dissolved. He was the pivot on which its whole machinery turned."

"Then," said the Saxon major, "I suppose we are now free, to starve or seek new service, Count? Our term of engagement is expired; we may look for some fresh adventure, join the Palatine for the promise of pay, or the Archdukes for the honour of the thing—but Heaven help him who expects more gold in these beggarly days."

"Not so, Major," said De Bassenvelt; "you are all destined for better things than a menial search for service such as these. Tell me, gentlemen, have ye been satisfied under my command?"

"We have, we have, all of us!" cried every

voice, save Lyderic's, who sat unmoved and silent.

“Then if so, will ye be content to share my fate under that of another?”

“Willingly,” cried the Saxon, “provided he pays as you did.”

“Never mind payment, Count. I am his man, if he's as fond of fair fighting as yourself,” said the Irishman.

“Money and fighting are both good in their way,” coolly observed the Scot, “and no one doubts my countrymen's appreciation of either. But for my own part, before pledging myself to any particular situation, I will beg leave, Count Ivon, to know something of the principles and motives of him I am to act under.”

“The wish of our Colonel is enough for us! I speak for us five Brabancons. The name of De Bassenvelt is our pledge! His word is our warrant,” loudly exclaimed one of the Walloons; and the single Spaniard bowed his head in grave assent. Lyderic looked sullenly pas-

sive; and the universal suffrage seemed thus given.

“ My brave and gallant friends, ye shall all be satisfied !” exclaimed De Bassenvelt. “ The commander we shall be enrolled under is a hero : wisdom, worth, and valour are vouched for by his very name. In a little while you shall know it, and all that I expect from ye—that I reckon on, rather let me say. By and bye our friends will be returned—their voices will join with yours, and then all will be ready for the avowal that I long to make, and you will rejoice to hear. In the mean time let the wine flow freely. It is the life-blood of good fellowship—the very soul of society. Come, varlets ; fresh flagons on the board ! Bring Champaign and Auvernat. We must not let the Rhein-wein turn sour : up goblets again. Here’s to our valiant lion, Don Diego, whose words, though they be but fume, ever follow the flame of his deeds. Let the culverins and falconets of Turk’s-head bastion fire a

salvo to salute him as he crosses the stream. Look to it, Lyderic !”

Scarcely had these orders been given, when the sound of trumpets, followed by a running volley of fire arms, was heard from the other side of the river. Count Lyderic, as the captain on duty, had passed forward De Bassenvelt's orders ; and the cannoneers sent back the sounds, as if a hundred echoes had united their reverberations, to return Don Diego's report of his coming. All was in movement at these inspiring sounds; several of the party rose from table, to gaze through the twilight from the balcony that hung above the precipice and looked upon the river. Count Ivon addressed a few words to Beatrice, who replied by a smile that spoke high meaning ; and he then seemed for awhile absorbed in thought. Lyderic sat still, morosely unmoved by what was passing : others plied the bottle, from the charms of which they felt no more powerful attraction. Gaspar re-

mained fixed in bewilderment of thought, and indecision as to action.

But a short time elapsed before the creaking of bolts, bars, and chains, the clatter of horses' hoofs, and the rattling of arms and accoutrements announced the arrival in the castle court of Don Diego and his party. He soon came stalking along the flagged corridor; and stooping low, he passed beneath the gothic archway of the entrance door, and strode two or three paces into the eating hall. The ludicrous air of bombast which had raised many a smile at this warrior, was now forgotten in consideration of his important achievement; and Count Ivon interrupted the opening of a pompous oration, by rising from his seat, advancing, and cordially embracing the victorious Don.

“My brave Diego,” said he, “let us spare words on this occasion; you have done a deed of greater value than your modesty would allow you to think. You have gained a title

to a much higher honour than my simple thanks. Where is your prisoner ?”

“Count Ivon,” exclaimed the Don, stretching up to the utmost limits of the perpendicular, “I have done my poor service in obedience to your commands. I looked on the enemy, and they dispersed as mists before the sun. I held up my finger, and their leader trembled, as a partridge that sees a falcon’s talon. Had I given him but one fillip, he had fallen, like a tree struck by thunder ; but I spared him, as you ordered, and I have him safe for your acceptance.”

“Let me see him forthwith,” said De Bassenvelt impatiently ; and on the word Don Diego turned round, and gave a violent pull to a cord which was now perceived to be attached to his girdle, and trailing behind him through the door way. Obeying the rough and degrading summons, Schenck came involuntarily forward, his arms tightly pinioned, and guarded

by a soldier at each side. His head was uncovered, and his stern and unanimated countenance formed a strong contrast to the blustering glow on that of his captor. As the latter shortening his hold, chucked the cord towards him, the fierce freebooter was dragged stumbling in, and with so ludicrous a movement that a roar of laughter burst from the officers. But Count Ivon, apparently shocked at the indignities thus offered to the prisoner, snatched the cord from Don Diego's hand, and untied the knots, exclaiming the while, with looks of reproof cast at those around him,

“ Is this treatment for a soldier of repute ? Is a man like this to be used as a dog, dragged in a halter, and the mark of ridicule ? No, my friends, we must respect the vanquished, and not trample on the fallen. Colonel Schenck, you will pardon me for insults I never meant, and cannot sanction.”

Schenck looked at his bonds, but spoke not.

“ With due submission, Count Ivon de

Bassenvelt," cried Don Diego, in high dudgeon, " I must say that no disgrace nor punishment can be too marked for the cold blooded murderer of their Highnesses' Provost, and him who cut the ears off the very venerable Provost's lieutenant. The cord you are now unloosing is that which bound the sufferers to the stake, where they were burned alive." An exclamation of horror ran through the group, and several swords were half drawn to inflict summary justice on the perpetrator of these deeds ; when Don Diego interposed between his own denunciation and the culprit, crying out loudly, " burned alive, in part—wholly, in intention, gentlemen—but the outrage was not consummated, for *I* waved my hand, the lion shook his mane, and the flames ceased ; and as I spoke the words of deliverance, the victims walked forth, with no harm but a scorched skin, and a pair of ears the less."

At this explanation of the unaccomplished crime, the hearers were disposed to absolve

completely the equally guilty prisoner, such is the effect produced by exaggerated accusations ; and Don Diego's burlesque extravagance turned the rising indignation aside, so that Count Ivon found in his officers ready assistants for Schenck's relief. The cords were soon cut, and the unshackled captive placed in the chair next to Count Ivon. Don Diego was seated at the other side, drinking freely of brandtwein, which he called for in preference to less potent cordials ; and the remaining officers of his squadron now joined the party, having first, by De Bas-senvelt's desire, seen the Provost and his lieutenant safely lodged in the castle infirmary, where they were instantly attended by the household surgeon.

The table, now completely filled, presented an aspect of revelry that trenched on the boundaries of debauch. Gaspar looked on at this strange spectacle of manners to which his abstemious experience had never produced any parallel. Paul Cuyper, the jovial genealogist,

who upheld the character of his province, pressed the Moriscoe to drink, with many an argument drawn from the records of generations gone by, and proverbs of which his own country furnished him plenty.

“ You must learn to howl while you are with wolves, my good Biscayan, and to drink with honest fellows,” cried he, slapping Gaspar on the shoulder. “ Cheer up, my brave recruit : it is only snails and assassins that shrink into themselves, at a shower of rain, or a flow of liquor. Why, cheer up, man ; I mean no offence—clear off to the health and long life of our noble entertainer—see how *he* fills and drinks !”

The Moriscoe, thus pressed, and wincing under the genealogist’s unintended severities, followed his counsel, and the example of the rest ; but listened attentively, at the same time, to what was passing at the principal table, and sat with his dark eye fixed on the scene, in which he could not sympathize nor feel himself

a partaker. Preparations for a second supper were now made, in accordance with the custom of the times and the country. Hams and tongues, dried and smoked, but undressed; salmon of the Scheldt, preserved at Amsterdam; herrings, cured by the best recipe of the celebrated Buckelz of Bruges; crusts of fried bread, with pepper and salt; and various other ingenious devices to serve up (what we call) devils in disguise, were set out. Fresh glasses and fresh flagons appeared, and all made ready to renew the revelry; those who had been so employed since the sun went down, as if he were still in the meridian, and the new comers, as though he had but just risen.

Conversation, as we may by courtesy call it, ran high. Tongues wagged, and words flowed with great facility; but little was said worth record or remark by full eighteen twentieths of the party. In this large proportion we include Lyderic, who spoke not a word, but in reply to some question directly addressed to

him; and Beatrice, whose whole attention was fixed on Count Ivon and Schenck, who discoursed together, in a deep under tone that was uninterrupted by the boisterous conviviality around them. The inferior actors in the scene were on their parts absorbed in their own chatter, their rough pleasantries, and the main business in hand—filling the bowl and passing the flask.

One of the most actively employed in this way was Don Diego Leonis, who eat, drank, and rhodomontaded, in a style worthy to be recorded by Brantome himself, as much of it was in reality. He related his late enterprize, in all the fustian of exaggeration; while the sharp ears of Martin Schenck caught, at the other side of the table, assertions and insinuations which he could not brook. But he did not contradict them, letting the Don undisturbedly intoxicate himself with brandtwein and vanity, and reserving to his own choice the proper time for reply or notice. Schenck himself

drank deep on this occasion; but at every goblet he emptied, he seemed to grow more circumspect. The share he had at first taken in the discourse with Count Ivon gradually decreased to monosyllabic answers, and finally to affirmative nods, or dissentient shakes of the head.

De Bassenvelt, who knew human nature well, and was not easily deceived, saw that the time was now fairly arrived for his final proposition to his followers. Accordingly he rose up, and with an air of blended dignity and social ease, which won their attention and ensured their assent, he addressed them. Every tongue was silent the moment his voice was heard; and the full goblets were arrested, ere they reached the ever-thirsty lips that opened to receive the draught.

“My brave companions,” said he, holding his full glass in his hand, “in the true spirit of ancient custom, I am about to drink to the health of a hero, and pour a libation to the

finest cause that can animate the mind of man. It has been said that our Belgian ancestors thought that ‘to live was to drink ;’* and of a Walloon generally,—

“ If truth be hid in grapes or wine,
He’ll suck the secret from the vine.”†

Let it be so, my friends! We have good authority for the custom. Our neighbours, the Gerans, the Swimss, the English—all lovers of liberty as of good cheer—drink deepest when affairs of state are to be settled. The seven wise men of Greece discussed the profoundest problems over cups of Falernian. And we are to-night assembled, not for a mere debauch, but for a glorious purpose that will immortalize us all. We drank, just now, to the regeneration of Brabant; we have in our own power the accomplishment of our hope. Its realization

* Germanis vivere est bibere.

† The original, perhaps, of Owen’s epigram :—

“ Si lætet in vino verum, ut proverbia dicunt
Invenit verum teuto, vel invenit.”

depends on ourselves, for they who strike the first blow for liberty win half the battle. Our province has long been degraded. Instead of being an integral part of a free nation, it is a mere appendage of a distant despotism. The archdukes, in their mock sovereignty, are but the puppets of Spain, the links to bind these fine countries in perpetual servitude to that. But look to the northern states. See them independent and glorious; honoured by all the world; rich, flourishing, and happy; with no foreign foot upon their soil—while Flanders and Brabant are poor and desolated, trampled down by the heavy tread of strangers and oppressors. There are amongst you whom I address, men born in other lands, of different creeds, but cast in a common mould of thought and feeling. From you I fear no invidious jealousies. Brabant is indebted to you for good service; and you will not forsake her when she calls on your arms, and your hearts once more.”

“ No, by Heavens, we will not ! We are ready ! lead us on ! ” exclaimed three or four, in different accents and idioms ; and some of the foreigners, carried away by the impulse of the moment, spoke their own languages.

“ Corazon del fuego ! Yo vos seguiré a la muerte ! ” cried a Spaniard, with hands and eyes upturned.

“ I’ll drain the last drap o’ bluid in my heart for sic a gallant ! ” said the Scotchman, laying his broad hand solemnly on his breast.

“ Verdammt ! Ich bin dir mit herz und seele, verbunden—Ich wurde durch’s feur und wasser mit dir gehen ! ” muttered the Saxon.

“ Dash away, my fine fellow ! I’ll stick to you through thick and thin, if there wasn’t another. Whoop ! Whack ! ” vociferated the Irishman, giving a thump on the table that made all its paraphernalia dance and ring.

“ This is as I expected, ” exclaimed De Bas-senvelt. “ Now then, my friends, up all ! Let every man stand firm, with a heart as full as

his glass, and a head as erect as pride itself, to do honour to the name which is on my lips—

“ Maurice of Nassau ! ”

A shout of applause followed the gulp with which this toast was swallowed. Several of the party were prepared for the mention of this name, by Count Ivon's previous observations. Some took it as they would any other that was accompanied with a bumper of wine ; and a few felt but the flavour of the draught, scarcely knowing to whose health it was poured down. The purpose of Count Ivon was, however, gained. His whole corps of officers were now pledged in the cause he had espoused. He briefly proceeded to explain to them a few particulars, which it was essential they should know.

“ Within these three days,” said he, “ I have seen the prince. He is filled with benevolence towards us, and ready to receive us under his protection and into the confederation of the free states. I have ridden hard,

gentlemen, since I left ye; and three days and nights have not been idly spent. This is the crowning of all. The good luck that threw this brave officer among us, the chance that made Martin Schenck my guest, and the readiness with which he has just now acceded to the offers I was authorised to make him, have set the seal upon our success. While he remained our enemy, or rather not decidedly our friend, no enterprize like ours could have been ventured on. We only waited to secure him. He is now allied to us by the pledge of honour,—a soldier's bond. He is now full colonel in the service of the states of Holland, the rank he held in the ungrateful armies of the tyrant. Here, gentlemen, is his commission, signed by the prince's hand—and here is mine—and your's, my friends, each and every one; so surely did I answer for your unanimous accordance in my views."

With these words he produced a leather case which had lain beside him, and taking out

the different documents, he handed each officer that which transferred him into the service of the States, confirming to each the rank which he held in De Bassenvelt's regiment of Black Walloons.

Then, on a signal given by Ivon to an attendant, the latter brought forward another case. This he unlocked, and produced from it a number of chaplets, formed of white beads strung together with silver clasps. He spread a quantity of these on the table ; and holding up one in his hand, he said,

“ Look on this, my friends ! All will understand, though few may recognise, this badge of Walloon freedom. I need scarcely say that such was the distinctive mark, borne in the brief yet brilliant era of the junction of our province with those happier states which have not relapsed into slavery. To-night we revive it. Each one of these chaplets has been woven by fair fingers. Here is the heroine, who, devoted to our glorious cause, has thrown

the charm of female sympathy around it. She shall instal us each with this insignia. And the remembrance that it was twined round our necks by the hands of Beauty, will not lessen its virtue in the keeping of the gallantry which consecrates our cause. Here, Beatrice; I bow to receive this sacred pledge from thee.”

Beatrice, gracefully rising at the call, placed a chaplet round Count Ivon’s neck, and clasped it there. She successively did the same by each of the officers, who all advanced for the purpose; and then, taking one of these simple collars of an order of which Patriotism and Valour were the founders, she attached it round her own neck, and exclaimed,

“ I thus consecrate myself to the deliverance of Brabant, and the faithful service of its regenerator, Ivon de Bassenvelt ! I devote my services of mind and body to the cause in which he has embarked. I will follow him in the contest, in danger, even to death. I cast aside from this moment all the weakness of woman-

hood—and I live but for his glory and his country's freedom !”

A burst of deep-felt applause followed these words. Every man pressed his hand to his breast, in signal that he adopted the vow of Beatrice as his own ; then seized on the document that ensured his rank and service ; and in the triple enthusiasm of adventure, gallantry, and wine, each firmly believed himself a hero.

CHAPTER X.

LYDERIC DE ROULEMONDE alone formed an exception to the general excitement just described. He sat, throughout the changes of this evening, as if his mind had fled to some other sphere, casting a dark shadow o'er the frame it had abandoned. His fine face was marked with traces of discontent, which had evidently worked from within. No furrow from common causes was there. He was young and vigorous, and ought to have been happy. He had qualifications enough to ensure him

success and enjoyment in almost any pursuit. But he wanted that springy charm of character which grows from the confidence of inward worth, and strengthens in the pride of thinking and acting from one's self. The fruits of his mind were not indigenious. Every word, every act, and almost every thought was imitation; and while conscious of inferiority to those he copied, he hated the original, because it forced him to despise the counterfeit. Envy was the vulture that gnawed his heart—that contemptible passion, which leads men to magnify the qualities of others, and sinks their own even below their level; and is followed by “hatred, malice, and uncharitableness,” in a sequence more natural than was perhaps calculated by the framers of the sublime homily in which they so succeed each other.

An envious man can never rise beyond his station, nor be happy in it. He is always measuring himself with those above him; not with the noble emulation of raising himself,

but in the paltry hope of dragging them down. He has therefore no enjoyment in their merit. He is dazzled, not enlightened, when he looks at them, and chilled when he turns his gaze upon himself. His best feelings expire under the influence of one mean vice; and thoughts and deeds of baseness supervene, with a speed that shocks, and a force that overwhelms him.

Such a man was Lyderic de Roulemonde. Of an ancient house, he had squandered his inheritance. Like most of the young nobles of Brabant, he was educated in Spain, and entered early into the army. He met Ivon de Bassenvelt as companions in arms may meet—in the dissipations of military life, when all float alike on the surface of the world, nor dive into the depths of nature, to know their own or fathom that of others. In the careless way in which friendships of the kind are formed, De Bassenvelt formed his. He saw in Lyderic no lack of what are considered in camps as the soldier's

best qualities—courage and profusion; and he entered into a close and confidential intercourse with him, the more readily, perhaps, because Lyderic thought highly of his talents and esteemed his character. For Ivon was not insensible to the pleasure of exciting approbation, nor ungrateful for its expression. He did justice to his new friend's accomplishments, even on points where he felt them to be superior to his own. In short, his friendship was the free and cordial sentiment of a noble nature, seeing and putting forth the merits of its object, and feeling itself illuminated, not eclipsed by their display.

The feelings of Lyderic were the direct contrary to this. As soon as his friend's advantages shone forth, he felt as though his own became extinct. He had no sympathy with another's success. The praises of Ivon became discord to his ears. The admiration excited by his valour, his enterprize, and his taste, appeared overstrained or misplaced. Lyderic was ashamed

of this turn of feeling, yet he would not confess and shake it off; but, like the Spartan youth who held the stolen reptile beneath his cloak, the closer he concealed the passion the fiercer it gnawed, till his heart was eaten to the core.

Ivon, unconscious of this altered state of feeling, knew not how to account for the bursts of moroseness occasionally escaping from Lyderic. Judging by himself, he thought, that had any abatement of his friend's regard taken place, he would have honestly displayed it, and broken off their intercourse. But seeing the usual semblance of attachment, he attributed to some passing caprice an occasional change that excited his pity rather than his resentment. Hoping to alleviate, he fed the evil, in heaping kindness upon him whom he still thought his friend. For while a generous mind rejoices in receiving almost as much as in conferring a benefit, a mean one writhes under obligation; and even in granting it, is only pleased by the belief that it inflicts a degradation.

All that thus rankled in Lyderic's mind was of slow development. He continued long in seeming what he ought to have been in fact. He was, by Ivon's interest, appointed to the train of the archdukes; and he was the first named officer in his regiment. Only two others had superior rank to him, the Saxon major, a hardy veteran, and Don Diego Leonis, his senior in years and standing, chosen to the station of lieutenant-colonel by De Bassenvelt, who knew that a boaster is not (as is commonly thought) of necessity a coward; and who had seen enough of the Don to be certain that he was valiant, faithful, and discreet.

Lyderic did his duty in his new post, as a task, not as a pleasure. Still Ivon unsuspectingly entrusted to him even the secret intentions which were only publicly avowed the night we have described. And he admitted him to *a share* in another project, which had for some time previously occupied him not a little—the carrying off Beatrice from the con-

vent at Bruges. They had frequently been reciprocal confidants of each other's adventures of gallantry. An avoidance of a friend's pursuits in that way was high among the points of chivalry then existing. A violation of that trust was looked on as the deadliest breach of faith. Confidences of the kind were therefore more frequently given than in later days ; when the true point of honour became better understood, and refinement having broken down the barriers raised by chivalry, men learned to trust in no one when interest or passion might tempt to treachery.

The moment that Lyderic saw Beatrice, on her arrival at the Castle of Welbasch under Ivon's triumphant care, a passion apparently deep as it was violent, took possession of him. In a few days, it seemed wholly to absorb him. She appeared imbued with a spirit of female heroism, which in those times exerted such powerful sway ; and the male attire which she constantly preserved, threw a barrier, as it were,

before her charms, without communicating any notion of indelicacy, which, in our days, would have weakened their effect. She at once delighted and awed Lyderic; and he suffered tortures, in witnessing the tone of cordial freedom with which De Bassenvelt preserved, as he had gained, her heart.

Inflamed by this passion, which had its foundation, perhaps, as much in envious jealousy of Ivon's success as in a sudden desire for its object, Lyderic was hurried on by these mixed emotions, with an impetuosity the greater in proportion to his long constraint. He at once resolved on the possession of Beatrice, and the destruction of the man she loved; and seizing the advantage of Ivon's last absence for a final conference with Prince Maurice, he despatched an anonymous communication to Trovaldo, informing him of the place of Beatrice's retreat, and into whose hands she had fallen. He assured him of a ready co-operation in the castle, should he send forward to the rendezvous appointed the

brother of Beatrice (with such token of his identity as Gaspar was provided with), to revenge her seduction and his own dishonour. He, however, carefully guarded against any expression that might betray him to be the author of this treachery; and in meeting the Moriscoe, and facilitating his entrance into the castle, he preserved his cautious concealment, as has been seen.

When Ivon had given orders for Schenck's accommodation, as befitted his present rank, he proposed a parting goblet to the sound slumber of all, and the fair rising of the morrow's independence. After this pledge being cordially passed round, with much wine spilt on the board, and not a few glasses broken in the operation of clinking them together (as the type of an amity as brittle, perhaps, as they), Beatrice set the example of retiring. She took her leave with much gracefulness, being waited on at the door by a female attendant, a somewhat incongruous association with her attire, and the

readiness with which she adopted the ways as well as the dress of men.

No sooner had she disappeared, than Schenck, to whom De Bassenvelt had previously made known her sex, addressed his host as follows.

“Count Ivon de Bassenvelt, the absence of that lady allows me to speak on a subject which nothing but the presence of a female could have hitherto restrained. We are here now as equals, colonels in the same service, fellow soldiers, and bound for life and death in the same cause. I hold in my hand the commission which you have been authorized to offer me. In accepting it I feel that every reproach is washed away, which might have attached to a reputation not entirely obscure, from my late association with men, driven by the baseness of those who rewarded my services with neglect to throw themselves on the world and their good weapons for support. The motives which led me to join such men are for my own conscience. For my acts, while at their head, this

document absolves me, for I own no authority in these realms but the free states of Holland, and that of the provinces we are now joined together to liberate from the yoke of Spain. But—and I here address ye all, my brother soldiers—one stain has been rudely flung upon my personal feelings, and by myself alone can that be expunged. One man has dared to beard me, and degraded himself by an attempt to debase me while in his power, but, even there, his superior beyond the span of measurement. I cannot condescend to specify the outrage, which was witnessed by ye all.

“Count Ivon de Bassenvelt, never has mortal man heard Martin Schenck make so long a speech as this. Words signify little. Deeds only speak. I demand the rights of chivalry. I throw myself on your hospitality. I disclaim all slight to you or your regiment. But I single out the miscreant thus, and thus I dare him to instant and mortal combat.”

With these words he dashed his heavy glove

across the table, and full in the face of Don Diego Leonis. This rather unknighly mode of flinging down his gage took the Don by absolute surprise. The force of the appeal, aiding the influence of the copious draughts he had been pouring down his throat, made him stagger from his equilibrium. A murmur ran round the table. The insult was shocking—no accommodation—no delay could be thought of—blood must flow. Schenck called on De Bassenvelt for a sword. Don Diego recovering his balance and recalling his senses, had his weapon already out of its sheath. Before Ivon could interpose his authority or advice, Lieutenant Gallagher, the young Irishman before spoken of, had drawn his rapier, and placed it in Schenck's asking hand, which grasped it with a force and wielded it with a management that belied the evidence of the large potations he had swallowed. The wine seemed to have produced on him only the effect of steadying his arm, clearing his head,

and brightening his eye. The latter was fixed on his opponent with deadly lustre, as though it would have killed him at a glance.

In a moment the length of the table was passed at either side by the furious pair, and they took their stand in the open space between that and the second board, at which still sat, in awful observance, Gaspar and the rest of the party with whom he had been at first placed, and, by De Bassenvelt's orders, retained in the hall. Lyderic and the other officers formed a ring round the combatants; and Count Ivon himself, finding that interference would be vain, stood forward in the circle, to see that all should be as fair as the inequality of the men's intellects permitted.

The long rapiers soon clashed, and at every pass made and parried, the blades sounded like a subtle breeze rushing through some crevice in a broken pane of glass. The lights from the lamps suspended from the ceiling, or those brought from all quarters of the

chamber and placed upon the floor, shewed plainly to each combatant the person of his foe, and the different rays, falling obliquely across each fierce visage, allowed the desperate expression of each to be fully displayed.

Lounge after lounge was made at either side. Schenck stood firm and rigid on one spot. Don Diego attacked, advanced, and sprang back again, with a skill and vigour that proved the effects of wine to have yielded to the deadly passion aroused in his breast. No wound was observed to be received, yet blood soon trickled on the floor, just between each, and where their arms were crossed in the heat of the assault, so that it was impossible to ascertain from which it flowed.

“Hold, gentlemen! Enough!” cried Ivon. “Blood has been drawn—the quarrel is decided—part them—part them!”

On hearing these words, Don Diego threw his sword wide from his guard, and paused; but Schenck, seeing the press forward made

by Ivon and the rest to separate him from his prey, and marking the Don's unwary movement, he uttered a hoarse yell, and cried out,

“Who durst step between me and my revenge! Again, miscreant, at you!”

And with a skilful turn of his arm he crossed Don Diego's blade, and struck it from his hand. He then bounded on him, grappled him, with his left hand, by the throat, shortening his sword the while; and, after a brief struggle, he flung the Spaniard to the floor, and fell upon him designedly with his whole weight.

“Now, caitiff, beg your life, or die!” said he, sternly, raising his sword-arm with a few deadly inches of the steel—but enough by practised measurement—pointed to Don Diego's breast.

“Diego Leonis beg his life from a base-born hound like thee!” exclaimed the gallant Don, struggling with every nerve — “from

thee, thou burner of grey-bearded men ! thou butcherly cutter off of ears !”—

“To thy heart, then !” cried Schenck, jerking back his arm a span, to add force to the final blow ; when it was instantly arrested from behind, and the weapon suddenly drawn through his hand, with the infliction of a severe wound, by another which grasped the hilt. Schenck, starting up, in the double influence of pain and rage, looked round, and saw the figure of a young and lovely female close to him, her hair flowing disordered, his sword in her hand, and Count Ivon, with looks of pleased surprise, holding her in his arms. It was Beatrice, who had, after leaving the hall, but just loosed her hair, thrown off the doublet and cloak, from whose imprisonment she had panted to get free, and flung her dressing-robe around her, when she heard the clashing of swords, and hurried to the spot, where, unmindful of the chivalrous etiquette or feminine decorum which might com-

mand a dignified non-interference in an act of murder, she interposed, to baulk the bloody aim of one, and to save the life of another—she knew not and asked not whom.

Don Diego, released from the grasp of his merciless foe, raised his huge length, and was soon helped upon his legs by his surrounding friends. Although wounded in the arm, he attempted to renew the fight; but he and Schenck were separately encompassed by the spectators, and each hurried away in different directions.

De Bassenvelt, folding one arm round Beatrice, tenderly and respectfully supported her from this scene of her first contact with weapons and bloodshed. Having seen her safe in her apartments with her handmaid TrINETTE, a simple girl from the village below, who, more timid than her mistress, had nearly fainted at the clash of swords and the tumult of loud sounds, De Bassenvelt returned to the hall. Schenck and Don Diego were by this time

removed; almost all the officers had retired; and the persons composing the second table had broken up into two or three groups at the lower end of the apartment. Gaspar alone still sat in his place, with a fixed stare that seemed to embody vacancy, or people it with objects of his own fancy.

“Lyderic, come hither,” said De Bassenvelt, taking him under the arm, and leading him to the distant part of the hall—“I have much to say to you in a brief space. What think you of our recruit, yonder? Is he no more than what he seems?”

“Why put these questions to me, De Bassenvelt? Am I the expounder of every riddle that takes a mortal shape?”

“Nay, be not angry, nor let this peevish mood of yours take head to-night. It is enough to know I have good cause to guard against this man; I shall therefore take him wholly under my own care. I will by and by lead him to my private chamber, and sift him and

his character thoroughly. If I do not err, I may succeed in making him no mean agent in my plans. And now, Lyderic, for yourself a word or two. A matter of equal import to the common cause, and of infinitely more for my own individual sake, leads me to urge your immediate departure for Bruges. You are aware of the vast import of that place to the views of the confederate states. Agents and emissaries from Prince Maurice have already sounded the burghers; but much remains to be done. The place is divided into mean factions, which counteract, from mere local jealousies, the general interests of all: but a great step has been gained in the choice of the new burgomasters. The chief and leading one is the well known Van Rozenhoed, the gold-beater, the richest and the honestest man in Bruges, or, perhaps, in Flanders. He is an open advocate of liberty, and a warm partizan of the free states. His only daughter, Beatrice's convent friend, of whom I have so

much discoursed with you, is now at home with her father. Four days hence he gives his grand installation feast; when suitors beyond counting, and from various quarters, are formally to put in their claims for the hand of this rich and beautiful heiress.

“ And now for the great point. Start not, my friend!—I mean to place *my* name on the wooing list, and ask this paragon to wife!”

“ You, De Bassenvelt! renounce your libertine career, and, on the eve of an attempt in which life may not be worth the purchase of an hour, dream of an encumbrance such as this!”

“ Even so, Lyderic. Mighty motives urge the step. Wealth I must have. You know I have cast all on the hazard of this die. Save the bare walls of this castle, I have nought but what is embarked in the cause. I hope for success; and to hope for has been hitherto to have with me. But the tide may turn, and this Maid of Bruges must be my harbour of

safety if all else be wrecked. But, hark ye, Lyderic, one other feeling exists—burns in—consumes me:—I *love* her ! Canst thou not imagine such an impulse as that ? In short, she must be mine.”

“ What ! have you seen her, then ? How, when, and where ? ”

“ No matter. I *have* seen her—and more, and to my cost, perhaps, I know that she abhors me, without knowing whom she abhors ; and when she hears my name, its sound will shock her very heart. I have outraged her delicacy, but I will heal the wound ; and *you* must tell her so. You must woo her for me, Lyderic. I durst not present myself to her, even if I could ; for even now my carrying off the novice, and robbing the church of its prey must be bruited through Bruges with loathing and execration.”

“ How could the truth have come to light ? ” asked Lyderic, looking askance.

“ I care not how, nor mean to inquire,”

said Ivon, in his usual reckless way. "I am now abroad; the hunters have found my lair; but I at once brave and despise them all, they who have sought, or him who has betrayed me. Beatrice's being here was known to many. It had been better, perhaps, had I confided the fact to you, my trusty friend. But now," continued he, without giving his companion time to shew embarrassment which conscience might have caused, "now to the main point. You will accept my mission? Wooing in *my* place, Lyderic, will sit easy on you, eh?"

Lyderic did not wish to encounter the scrutinizing glance of an eye that he knew pierced deeply when it would. He replied, still looking downwards, that he was willing to undertake the task, but scarcely thought he could appear publicly in Bruges, as the news of their revolt must soon spread far and near.

"'Tis to obviate that objection that I must urge your instant departure," replied Ivon. "That may well bear the appearance of dissent

and flight from our rebel proceedings. At the court of the archdukes, it will be a passport to high favour, and if you manage well, your best introduction to the governor of Bruges. Under this safe protection you may forward my object with the burgomaster's daughter; and for my sake I am sure you will not shrink from a little *apparent* treachery, Lyderic?"

The person thus appealed to felt conscience smite him hard, and he began to fear that Beatrice might have aroused Count Ivon's jealousy. He became therefore as anxious as Ivon was to hurry his departure from the castle. He thought it would be well to be absent during the perpetration of Gaspar's tragedy. He liked the plan, so clearly traced for him, of making good terms with the archdukes; he reckoned on having a fair field opened for his designs on Beatrice, as soon as De Bassenvelt should be despatched; and he was suddenly and powerfully struck with the occasion that offered of preferring his own suit to the so

much sought for heiress of Bruges, his treachery, envy, and cupidity being all roused into action by Ivon's words and views. He therefore gave an immediate assent to the pressing solicitations of the latter for his instant departure, under the promise of receiving a letter from him, with full details as to his proceedings on arriving at Bruges.

Count Ivon then gave orders to an attendant to conduct the recruit into the anti-chamber of his private apartment, intimating to Gaspar that he would soon join him. Lyderic saw the Moriscoe follow the guide from the hall; and as the door closed on him, while Ivon pressed his new ambassador's hand, and wished him a safe journey, the latter felt a shudder that crept through every nerve. It was the last struggle of good feeling, crushed beneath the tread of crime.

“Be it so!” murmured he, as he paced the long corridor leading to his own apartment. “He facilitates his fate. It is his doom, and

who may cope with destiny ! Be it so !” and he hurried into the concealment of his chamber, as one who fires the train of a mine, and runs into shelter from the coming explosion. After a short interval of hurried preparation, he hastened from the castle, mounted his horse, which his varlet had quickly prepared ; and then passing through the outposts of the fortress, he crossed the river, in the boat in which he had, a few hours before, ferried over the Moriscoe. He took the road on the left bank leading to Namur, avoiding the scene of the late dispersion of the Picaroons, where some remnant stragglers of the band might be abroad. As he fled, he at times involuntarily turned round and listened, and again galloped fiercely on and endeavoured to stop his ears, lest sounds of murder and wailing might be borne on the wind that seemed to pursue him.

Gaspar, the Moriscoe, stood in Count Ivon’s anti-chamber, his hand firmly clenching his dag-

ger's hilt. The scenes of the evening, which he had witnessed with such various emotions, were still confusedly flitting before him. He was yet agitated by all that had so deeply affected him. De Bassenvelt's gallant and chivalric demeanour, his high sentiments, so energetically expressed, and the surprising power he seemed to wield so lightly over the minds of all in contact with him, filled Gaspar with involuntary admiration for the man. Yet the too evident station which Beatrice held as his avowed mistress, had at times awakened his slumbering frenzy; and he was almost on the point of executing his desperate intention, as he saw him, so familiarly, yet so affectionately, lead her from the hall, when she was nearly exhausted by the effort that saved Don Diego's life. From that moment the Moriscoe's feelings had not subsided; and when the summons to repair to De Bassenvelt's room, and wait his coming, broke the reverie in which he had sat, it seemed to him that destiny had sounded the death doom

of his victim. He started up, and mechanically followed his conductor.

When the door of the anti-room was closed on him, he stood, as we have described him, transfixed in one spot. He heard voices in the chamber beyond; and he soon distinguished that of his sister, in converse with another. Imagination swiftly pictured Beatrice, in the act of undressing, and preparing, in all her feminine charms, to press the dishonouring bed of her seducer. The Moriscoe trembled in every joint—yet his teeth were firmly set, and a fierce tension contracted his brow. He stood prepared.

At length he heard footsteps coming along the gallery. He stepped forward one or two paces, and raised his hand. The door opened; and the lamp that dimly lighted the anti-room gleamed on the cloak-wrapped figure of the strange horseman, the companion of his journey. He knew him at once, by his hat, his mantle, and the whole air of his figure.

“ Now, Gaspar,” said the man, in his hoarse whisper, and walking close up to the Moriscoe, whose dagger shone in his half-raised hand—
“ I am as good as my word. Be firm and steady. You remember your oath ?”

Gaspar could not answer. Nervousness of feeling, and astonishment at this apparition of the avowed accomplice who had so long been lost to him, deprived him of all power of utterance.

“ Come on—keep close to me !” continued the mysterious stranger, preserving completely his self-command, with as much ease as when they trotted together along the causeway, or through the windings of the *Sonien Bosch*. He took Gaspar firmly by the right arm, and led him directly to the opposite folding doors, which with a bold movement he flung wide open. Gaspar started back, as if the gates of an unknown world had suddenly expanded before him. Instead of the bed-room which he had pictured to himself, with all its parade of

wanton voluptuousness, he looked into a plainly decorated saloon, where chastity might sit enthroned; and as if to embody the idea, the vow-breaking novice, the unblushing partner of De Bassenvelt's revelry, Beatrice herself occupied an oaken chair in the centre of the room, dressed in a simple robe of white, a wreath of orange flowers twined through her jetty locks; and the maiden cestus, common to the damsels of the Moriscoe race, clasped by a brooch of virgin gold round her waist. She rose to meet her brother, with a look beaming brightness and enthusiasm.

“Stand off, in thy burlesque trappings of virtue!” cried Gaspar, shrinking back at her approach. “Where is he, thy paramour—the instigator of this loathsome mockery—where is De Bassenvelt?”

“Here!” said the stranger, unclasping his mantle, and flinging it and his hat aside; and Count Ivon stood boldly up, with open arms, before his intended murderer.

“ Shades of my fathers, guide me !” cried the Moriscoe, again raising his dagger—“ Can guilt assume this aspect—can infamy wear looks like these ?”

“ Let thy heart answer thee !” exclaimed Beatrice, rushing into his embrace. “ Seek not the subtleties of moral distinctions, but hearken to the voice of nature and affection. *Could* infamy wear looks like these ?”

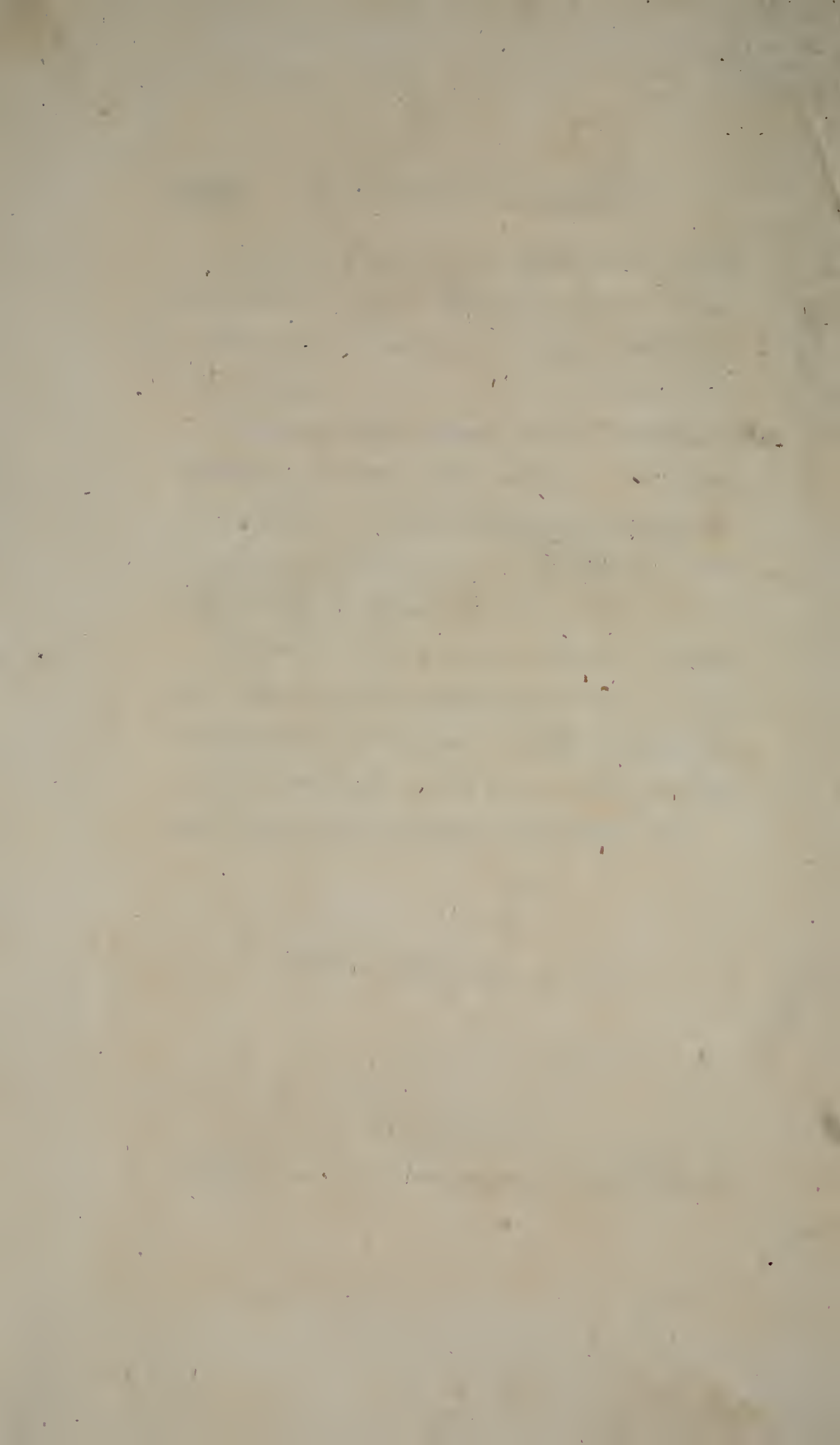
Gaspar gazed for a moment firmly on her, as he held her in his outstretched arms ; then, overpowered by the tide of his emotions, he clasped her closely to his bosom ; and, for the first time in his existence, he burst into tears.

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.

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